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Testimony before the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

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Washington, DC

April 19, 2007

[Refer also to the accompanying [information sheets](#) handed out at the hearing]

Thank you. Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Wolf, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your passion and enthusiasm for public diplomacy and for this opportunity to update you. Because this is my first time to testify before this committee, I also want to reiterate a statement I made in my initial hearing, that America's public diplomacy is neither Democratic nor Republican but American and I appreciate your bipartisan support.

Twenty months ago, when I started work at the State Department, more than 30 reports had been written about public diplomacy, many of them sharply critical, and many of our public diplomacy professionals felt their important work was undervalued. Today, a re-energized, re-invigorated public diplomacy team has implemented most of the key recommendations in those reports; public diplomacy now has a place at the most senior policy tables of our government; our public diplomacy programs are reaching more people around the world more strategically than ever before, and public diplomacy is now viewed as the national security priority that it is. Because our efforts against terrorism are more than a military or intelligence matter, but also an ideological struggle, we are asking you to fund urgent public diplomacy programs in this year's war on terror supplemental request, and to support increases for vital programs in our 2008 budget request.

As members of this committee well know, public diplomacy is a long-term effort that will require ongoing support for programs and personnel for years to come - yet we are making great progress and putting in place the institutions and partnerships that are critical to our success.

Twenty months ago, our higher education community was alarmed by declining numbers of international students and a lingering perception that student visas were hard to get in the aftermath of September 11th. Today, we have reversed that trend. We issued a record number of 591,000 student and exchange visitor visas this year and are actively partnering with America's higher education community to send a clear message that we want the future leaders of the world to come here to study and get to know us. Thanks to team efforts with our colleagues at Consular Affairs and at embassies across the world, the President of

Rice University recently said, "We have solved the student visa problem."

Let me pause here to extend deepest sympathies to all those affected by the horrible shootings at Virginia Tech this week. All of us were shocked and terribly saddened by this horrific tragedy. One thing it underscored is the international nature of US higher education, as the names and nationalities of the victims and their families came from around the world. I want to assure the world's students and their families that we want our schools to be places of safety, sanctuary and learning, and we are committed to doing all we can to assure the safety and security of our campuses.

Our flagship Fulbright program in FY06 is at a record high of 1,300 awards to American students, our growing Gilman program has increased the diversity of U.S. students participating in study abroad programs and our new National Security Language Initiative is bringing foreign language teachers here and sending American young people across the world to learn Arabic, Chinese, Farsi and other critical languages. Participation in our education and exchange programs has grown in the last three years from 27,000 to nearly 39,000 and will increase to more than 42,000 with your support for our budget requests. We are reaching new audiences. We have proven through evaluations that our English language teaching program for disadvantaged young people not only gives them a marketable skill, but also changes perceptions of America among a critical 14 to 18-year-old population. With your support for our supplemental request, we will expand this proven, popular program to even younger boys and girls ages 8 to 14, young people we currently don't reach, through summer and after school programs this year.

Twenty months ago, the federal government had no effective, up to the minute way to know what international media was communicating to mass audiences about America or its policies. Our new Rapid Response Unit now constantly monitors international media, informs American policy makers with a concise daily report of what is driving world news from the Middle East to Latin America, and provides our U.S. position on those issues to an email list of several thousand senior officials, from Cabinet secretaries to military commanders. Our Bureau of International Information Programs has been transformed into a high tech hub with web sites in English and six foreign languages and a digital outreach team that counters misinformation and myths on blogs in Arabic. A group of exchange students recently shared their experiences by posting videos on You Tube, and our new regional hubs have media spokesmen with language capability who appear regularly on television across the Middle East and in Europe and book other American officials to do the same - our presence on Arab media has increased by 30 percent since their inception last fall.

Twenty months ago, many of our ambassadors were reluctant to engage the media without pre-clearance from Washington - now we provide media tools and training -- and public diplomacy is a criterion in the evaluation of every ambassador and Foreign Service officer. A producer for an international news service recently wrote us that as a result of these efforts, quote: "Our ability to cover the transatlantic agenda is in better shape than it has ever been."

Twenty months ago, our inter-agency efforts were stalled. Today, we have developed integrated interagency plans to combat ideological support for terrorism in key countries. These plans identify specific target audiences and recommend programs to reach them, and with your support of the 2007 supplemental, we will begin funding these programs. We've developed a strategic communications plan for the US government and are in the process of creating an interagency counter-terrorism communications center at the state department. This center's daily mission will be developing culturally sensitive messages to undermine ideological support for terror. It will be staffed by experts who are able to tap into the resources of their home agencies.

Twenty months ago, numerous reports had recommended much greater cooperation with the private sector. Today, the new office of private sector outreach that we established in my office has leveraged more than \$800 million dollars in private disaster relief, job training, education and exchange programs through new partnerships with American companies, foundations, NGO's and private citizens. American CEOs have stepped forward to provide earthquake relief in Pakistan and to help rebuild Lebanon -- and at a private sector summit earlier this year at the State Department, the business community developed 11 specific recommendations

to get American businesses more involved in public diplomacy. Through a new partnership with FORTUNE Magazine's most powerful women, American business women are mentoring emerging women leaders across the world. In partnership with the Aspen Institute and 12 American communications schools, nearly 200 international journalists are currently in America meeting with American policy makers, receiving training in professional standards of objective reporting and learning more about our country.

Twenty months ago, we did not have interaction with the people of Iran and had not since 1979 - today we have successfully conducted four exchange programs with Iranian medical professionals and teachers and sent American wrestlers to a match in Iran. We have also expanded our exchanges with Iraq and Afghanistan after resuming the Fulbright program in those countries for the first time in more than two decades.

Twenty months ago, our cultural advisory committee highlighted a critical need for more cultural diplomacy. We have launched a new Global Cultural Initiative in partnership with groups like the Kennedy Center and American Film Institute to foster more cultural programs and exchanges. By doing so, we are fostering the freedom of expression that is the lifeblood of the arts and reminding audiences across the world that despite differences of language or culture or policy, we share a common humanity. We are dramatically expanding our sports programming and are working in partnership with America's professional and college sports community to reach out to young people in a way that also teaches life skills of team work, discipline, and respect for one another.

Your full support for our supplemental request and 2008 budget will fund programs in the three areas that I believe should be our main focus: expanding our education and exchange programs, improving our communications and highlighting the diplomacy of our deeds. Our people-to-people programming, including student and professional exchanges and English teaching programs, is one of the most effective things we can do to build better relationships around the world. Our most recent evaluation showed the overwhelming majority of students in our Access English language program reported a more favorable view of America as a result of their studies. "Before the Access program," a young man in Morocco said, "I had a kind of negative image about Americans, but after joining the program and knowing American teachers, I have a very different view." A student in Bangladesh said he had learned "the Americans are like us." With the explosion of media across the world we are competing for attention and credibility in a crowded communications environment and we must continue to expand and modernize our communications effort. The third area that we are emphasizing is what I call the "diplomacy of our deeds" - the concrete ways in which America is helping people around the world to have better lives, especially in areas people care most about: education, health and economic opportunity. Funding in our budget request will allow us to partner with USAID to publicize some of the development programs that are making such a powerful difference.

We realize this is a difficult budget environment and we are committed to evaluating our programs and funding those that are most effective. We have instituted a "culture of measurement" across public diplomacy, building on the success our education and cultural affairs office has had in evaluating its programs. Our new public diplomacy evaluation unit has initiated a "mission activity tracker" that is now being piloted and will go worldwide later this year to allow standardized tracking of our expenditures and the audience reached by activity. We are conducting focus groups and just completed the 10,000th survey in a new on-line evaluation system. What works we will expand and continue. What doesn't, we will change, cancel or improve.

I like to describe our efforts as "waging peace" -- because I believe we must be very intentional about reaching out to the rest of the world in a spirit of respect and friendship. Our three strategic imperatives are to foster a sense of common interests and values between Americans and people of other countries, to isolate, marginalize and discredit the violent extremists and to foster a positive vision of hope and opportunity that is rooted in our values: our believe in freedom, equality, the dignity and worth of every human being. I'd like to close with a story that tells me our public diplomacy programs are accomplishing these objectives. A young man from Malaysia told us as a result of what he had learned in our YES high school exchange program: "I want to dream! I want to become a Prime Minister and speak out against discrimination and oppression! ...I want to revamp our exam-oriented education system and expose our children to learning for learning's sake! I want to fight poverty, to cure cancer, to

resolve wars, to battle corruption, to educate children, to nurture lives! I want to give hope to our world!"

Members of the subcommittee, that's what you and I want, too. At a time when violent extremists are trying to recruit young people to die in suicide bombings, America's public diplomacy is helping give young people a reason to live. Thank you for your support -- I look forward to working with you and your great staff - and I look forward to your questions.



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