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GAO

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U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant Challenges

GAO

Accountability ★ Integrity ★ Reliability

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Why GAO Did This Study

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, focused attention on the need to improve public diplomacy efforts to cultivate a better public opinion of the United States abroad. However, recent opinion research indicates that many foreign publics, especially in countries with significant Muslim populations, view the United States unfavorably. GAO examined changes in the State Department's (State) public diplomacy efforts since September 11, whether State has an overall strategy for its public diplomacy programs, how it measures their effectiveness, and challenges it faces in implementing these programs.

What GAO Recommends

Among GAO's recommendations are that the Secretary of State develops a strategy that considers private sector public relations techniques in integrating its public diplomacy efforts and directing them toward common and measurable objectives; and strengthens efforts to train Foreign Service officers in foreign languages and public diplomacy. State generally concurred with our recommendations.

What GAO Found

Since September 11, State expanded its public diplomacy efforts in Muslim-majority countries considered to be of strategic importance in the war on terrorism. It significantly increased program funding and the number of Foreign Service officers in South Asia and the Near East. It also launched new initiatives targeting broader, younger audiences—particularly in predominantly Muslim countries—and plans to continue them in the future.

After September 11, State acknowledged the lack of, and the need for, a comprehensive strategy that integrates all of its diverse public diplomacy activities. Such a strategy is still in the development stage. The absence of an integrated strategy could impede State's ability to direct its multifaceted efforts toward concrete and measurable progress. Furthermore, an interagency public diplomacy strategy has not been completed that would help State and other federal agencies convey consistent messages and achieve mutually reinforcing benefits overseas.

State is not systematically and comprehensively measuring progress toward its public diplomacy goals. Its overseas performance measurement efforts focus on anecdotal evidence and program outputs, rather than indicate progress in changing foreign publics' understanding and opinions of the United States. (See table below.)

State's efforts face significant challenges, including insufficient time and staff to conduct public diplomacy tasks. Public affairs officers responding to our survey said that burdensome administrative and budgetary processes divert their attention from public diplomacy programs. In addition, about 21 percent of Foreign Service officers in language-designated public diplomacy positions overseas lack sufficient foreign language skills. We also found that about 58 percent of public affairs officers responding to our survey believe the amount of time to attend public diplomacy training is inadequate.

Public Opinion of the United States in Selected Muslim-majority Countries (percentage favorable view)

Countries	1999/2000	Summer 2002	Spring 2003
Morocco	77%	*	27%
Lebanon	*	35	27
Indonesia	75	61	15
Turkey	52	30	15
Pakistan	23	10	13
Jordan	*	25	1

Legend
*=no data available
Source: GAO, developed from The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press information.

Contents

Abbreviations

USAID   U.S. Agency for International Development
USIA   U.S. Information Agency

United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

September 4, 2003

The Honorable Henry J. Hyde
Chairman
The Honorable Tom Lantos
Ranking Minority Member,
   Committee on International Relations
House of Representatives

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, focused attention on the need to improve U.S. public diplomacy efforts designed to promote better appreciation of the United States abroad and greater receptivity to its policies among foreign publics. Opinion research indicates that publics in many foreign countries have unfavorable views of the United States, and dislike for U.S. foreign policy poses a particularly difficult diplomatic challenge. This is especially the case in countries with significant Muslim populations. The approximately $1 billion nonmilitary budget for U.S. public diplomacy is almost evenly divided between the State Department (State) and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees the activities of U.S. government-sponsored broadcasting overseas.[1] This report focuses on the State Department's public diplomacy efforts. A related report assesses those of the Broadcasting Board of Governors.[2]

This report examines (1) changes in State's public diplomacy resources and programs since September 11, particularly in countries with significant Muslim populations; (2) whether State has an overall strategy for its public diplomacy programs; (3) how State measures their effectiveness; and (4) what other significant challenges State faces in executing these programs.

To address all of our objectives, we administered a survey to the heads of public affairs sections at U.S. embassies worldwide covering such issues as guidance from various State Department offices; sufficiency of budgetary, staff, and other resources; and ability to adequately measure performance. The response rate to our survey was 76 percent. To grasp the range of

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[1] U.S. international broadcasting operations include the Voice of America, WorldNet Television and Film Service, Radio/TV Marti, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Sawa, and Radio Farda.

[2] U.S. General Accounting Office, *U.S. International Broadcasting: New Strategic Approach Focuses on Reaching Large Audiences but Lacks Measurable Program Objectives*, GAO-03-772 (Washington, D.C.: July 15, 2003).

State's key public diplomacy programs and how programs and resources have changed since September 11, we reviewed State budget requests, annual reports, and other program documentation. We also met with officials in State's Office of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Bureau of Public Affairs, the Office of International Information Programs, and regional bureaus. To assess whether State has an overall strategy for its public diplomacy programs, we reviewed relevant planning, program, and other documentation. We also met with cognizant State officials and a number of academics specializing in public diplomacy and international affairs issues and private sector officials from U.S. public relations and opinion research firms with international operations. To assess how State measures the effectiveness of its public diplomacy programs and to understand private sector methods for gauging the success of persuasive techniques, we met with officials in State's Office of Strategic and Performance Planning and the academic and private sector officials mentioned above. To gain a firsthand view of the challenges faced in executing public diplomacy programs overseas, we analyzed program documentation and met with U.S. embassy officers, host-country government officials, and private sector and nongovernmental organization representatives in the United Kingdom, Morocco, and Egypt. For further information on our overall scope and methodology, see appendix I. For further information on the development and results of our survey, see appendix II.

Results in Brief

Since September 11, State has expanded its public diplomacy efforts in Muslim-majority countries considered to be of strategic importance in the war on terrorism. In the two fiscal years since the terrorist attacks, State's overall public diplomacy budget increased by about 9 percent[3] in real terms, with the largest percentage of overseas increases going to two regions with significant Muslim populations—South Asia and the Near East. During this time, public diplomacy funding for South Asia rose by 63 percent and for the Near East by 58 percent.[4] In the same period,

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[3]Fiscal year 2003 figures are estimates. Percentage calculations were computed using constant 2003 dollars.

[4]Public diplomacy funding for the regions was calculated by adding public diplomacy funds allocated by regional bureau under the Appropriation for Diplomatic and Consular Programs to funds allocated by regional bureau under the Appropriation for Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs.

authorized numbers of Foreign Service officers in these two regions increased by 15 percent and 27 percent, respectively. Since September 11, State has developed plans and programs that emphasize reaching a broader and younger audience in countries with large Muslim populations. For example, State launched the Shared Values initiative, the first phase of which featured a series of minidocumentaries on Muslim life in America to demonstrate that the United States is an open society, and that Americans and Muslims share certain values and beliefs. State estimates that the program reached approximately 288 million people in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia. State's plans for future years include new exchange programs for high school students, expanded programs to teach English, and a continuation of the Shared Values initiative.

After September 11, State acknowledged the lack of, and need for, a strategy that integrates all of its diverse public diplomacy activities and directs them toward common objectives. However, the strategy to coordinate these efforts into a cohesive program is still in the development stage. The absence of an integrated strategy may hinder State's ability to plot and navigate a course to channel its multifaceted programs toward concrete and measurable progress. State's ability to develop an integrated strategy is complicated, in part, by the lack of an interagency public diplomacy strategy to guide governmentwide communication efforts. This makes it difficult to convey consistent messages and thus achieve mutually reinforcing benefits.

State is not systematically and comprehensively measuring progress toward its public diplomacy goals. State's overseas performance measurement efforts emphasize anecdotal evidence and program outputs, such as reporting favorable articles written by foreign journalists after they complete tours in the United States or by counting the number of speeches given by ambassadors, rather than gauging progress in changing foreign publics' understanding and attitudes about the United States. In addition, at the three overseas posts we visited, no reporting requirements were in place to determine whether the posts' annual performance targets were met. Public affairs officers generally do not conduct systematic program evaluations and receive only limited audience polling data to help measure progress. While establishing direct links between public diplomacy programs and results is difficult, the experiences of other U.S. government agencies and the private sector in assessing information dissemination campaigns offer some best practices, including the need to define success, what it will take to get there, and how it should be measured. The absence of concrete measures of progress limits State's ability to correct its course

of action or direct resources toward activities that offer a greater likelihood of success.

State faces a number of additional challenges to its public diplomacy efforts. Many public affairs officers reported having insufficient resources to effectively conduct public diplomacy: more than 40 percent of those we surveyed said the amount of time available to devote exclusively to executing public diplomacy tasks was insufficient, and more than 50 percent reported that the number of Foreign Service officers available to perform such tasks was inadequate. Public affairs officers also reported that the unique administrative and budgetary requirements associated with their programs were burdensome and hindered public diplomacy efforts overseas. About 21 percent of the officers posted overseas in language designated positions have not attained the level of language speaking proficiency required for their positions, hampering their ability to engage with foreign publics. Further, about 58 percent of the heads of embassy public affairs sections reported that Foreign Service officers do not have adequate time for training in the skills required to effectively conduct public diplomacy.

This report makes several recommendations to the Secretary of State to help improve State's planning, coordination, execution, and assessment of U.S. public diplomacy efforts. State generally agreed with our findings, conclusions, and recommendations. We have reprinted State's comments in appendix IV.

Background

State's overall public diplomacy goal is to inform, engage, and influence global audiences. This goal is aimed at reaching out beyond foreign governments to promote better appreciation of the United States abroad, greater receptivity to U.S. policies among foreign publics, and sustained access and influence in important sectors of foreign societies. Public diplomacy is carried out through a wide range of programs that employ person-to-person contacts; print, broadcast, and electronic media; and other means. Traditionally, U.S. public diplomacy focused on foreign elites—current and future overseas opinion leaders, agenda-setters, and decision makers. However, the dramatic growth in global mass communications and other trends have forced a rethinking of this approach, and State has begun to consider techniques for communicating with broader foreign audiences.

State's public diplomacy budget totaled an estimated $594 million in fiscal year 2003. About 41 percent, or $245 million, is slated for the International Visitor, Fulbright, and other educational and cultural exchange programs. Roughly 38 percent, or about $226 million, of State's public diplomacy budget goes to its regional bureaus, primarily to cover the salaries, expenses, and activities of public diplomacy officers posted at U.S. embassies. State embassy officers engage in information dissemination, media relations, cultural affairs, and other efforts. Around 12 percent, or about $71 million, funds speaker programs, publications, and other activities. The remaining 9 percent, or $51 million, funds programs related to public diplomacy, such as programs carried out by the National Endowment for Democracy. Figure 1 shows the key uses of public diplomacy resources.

Figure 1: Key Uses of State's Public Diplomacy Budget Resources, Fiscal Year 2003

9% — **$51M** Related appropriations

12% — **$71M** International information and other programs

41%

38% — **$226M** Regional bureaus

$245M Educational and cultural exchanges
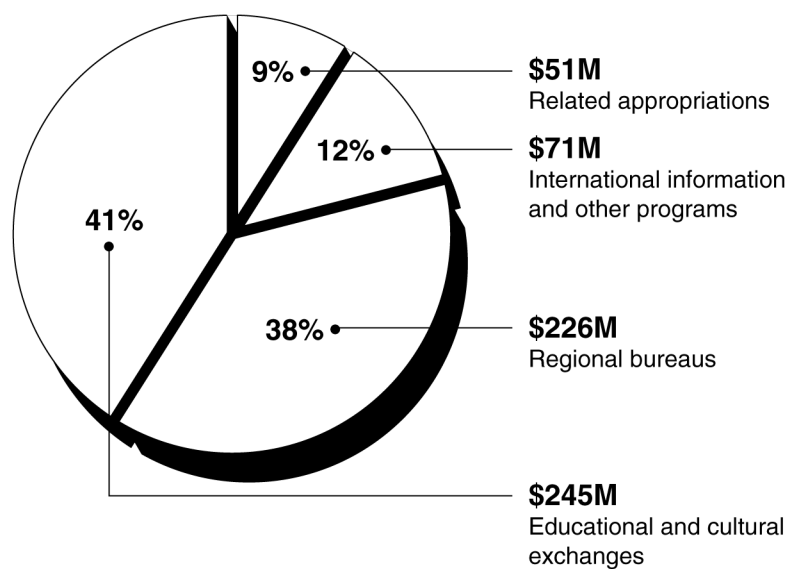
Source: State Department.

The U.S. government public diplomacy community primarily consists of the White House, State,[5] the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the Department of Defense, and the Central Intelligence Agency. Although it is not a central player in public diplomacy, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) also plays a role. The Secretary of State serves as a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors—an arrangement that is intended to strengthen coordination efforts between State and the Board. The U.S. Advisory Commission for Public Diplomacy, a bipartisan panel created by Congress and appointed by the President, provides advice on U.S. government public diplomacy activities. Figure 2 illustrates State's organizational structure for public diplomacy.

Figure 2: State's Organizational Structure for Public Diplomacy
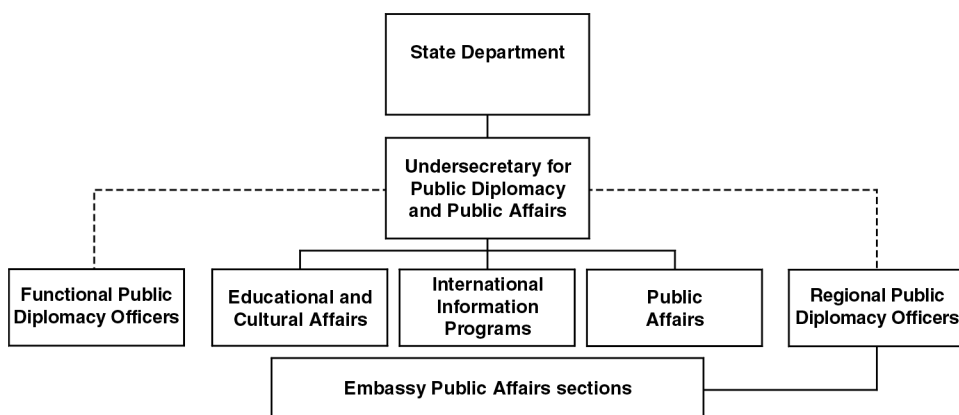
Source: State Department.

State's Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs is responsible for the overall leadership and coordination of State's public diplomacy efforts. The Undersecretary coordinates the efforts of the

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[5]On October 1, 1999, the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) was integrated into the State Department. The Office of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs was created to oversee the public diplomacy programs that USIA had administered. USIA's Office of Research and Media Reaction was merged into State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. USIA's administrative support personnel and functions were transferred into nonpublic diplomacy functions, such as State's Bureau of Administration. USIA's international broadcasting operations were taken over by the newly created Broadcasting Board of Governors. Although State may provide policy guidance and advice, the Board is independent from State.

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Bureau of Public Affairs, and the Office of International Information Programs. Public diplomacy personnel are also located in State's regional and functional bureaus and at overseas posts, but these individuals report to the management of their own respective organizational entities and not to the Undersecretary. Foreign Service officers in the public affairs sections of U.S. embassies have primary responsibility for executing many of the specific programs. While the Undersecretary does not manage the staffing process for public diplomacy personnel stationed overseas, she has authority over all program resources for both domestic and overseas public diplomacy activities. However, all Foreign Service officers posted overseas, including those in the public affairs sections of U.S. embassies, report ultimately to the Chiefs-of-Mission in their respective host countries. Figure 3 depicts the structure of a typical public diplomacy section at a large U.S. embassy overseas.

Figure 3: Typical Public Diplomacy Section at a Large U.S. Embassy
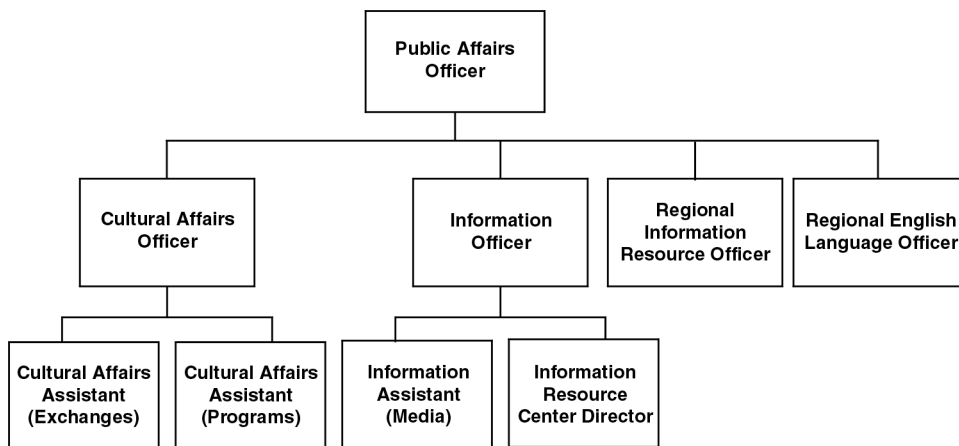
Source: State Department.

Public Opinion of the United States in Many Muslim-majority Countries Has Worsened

Favorable public opinion of the United States has declined worldwide in recent years, according to a number of opinion research firms. A study conducted by The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in 2002 found that negative opinion of the United States was most prevalent in the Muslim countries of the Middle East and in central Asia, even in those

whose governments have close ties to the United States.[6] For example, in Egypt, only 6 percent of those surveyed had a favorable view of the United States. The study also showed that, between 1999 and 2002, favorable opinions of the United States declined from 52 percent to 30 percent in Turkey and from 23 percent to 10 percent in Pakistan. Another study released by the Pew Research Center in March 2003 showed that public opinion of the United States further declined among its allies due to antiwar sentiment and disapproval of the administration's international policies.[7] For example, public opinion of the United States in Turkey further decreased from 30 percent to 12 percent during the Iraq campaign. And the Pew Center's recent report, released in June 2003, concluded that opinion of the United States in Muslim-majority countries has remained negative, with negative feelings increasing dramatically in several cases.[8] While favorable opinion of the United States in Turkey and Pakistan increased a few points in spring 2003, the report showed a dramatic decrease in favorable opinion in Morocco, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and many other countries over the past few years.

Zogby International released a poll in April 2002 that concluded that Arabs and Muslims generally hold a favorable view of American movies, television, science, technology, and education but have generally unfavorable views of the United States when it comes to its policy toward Muslim countries and Palestinians.[9] U.S. policy toward Muslim countries was given single-digit favorable ratings by Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Kuwait,

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[6]The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *What the World Thinks in 2002*, Pew Global Attitudes Project (Dec. 4, 2002). Pew surveyed 38,000 people in 44 countries over a 4-month period (July through October 2002) to assess how the publics of the world view their lives, their nation, the world, and the United States. Muslim countries surveyed included Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan.

[7]The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *America's Image Further Erodes*, *Europeans Want Weaker Ties*, Pew Global Attitudes Project (Mar. 18, 2003). Pew interviewed more than 5,500 people in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States from March 10 through 17, 2003.

[8]The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *Views of a Changing World*, Pew Global Attitudes Project (June 2003).

[9]Zogby International, *The Ten Nation Impressions of America Poll* (Apr. 11, 2002). Zogby International surveyed 10 Muslim countries between March 4 to April 3, 2002, to determine how adults in certain countries feel about American people and culture, and about U.S. policy in the Middle East region. The countries surveyed included Egypt, France, Indonesia, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela.

Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia. Public opinion of U.S. policy toward the Palestinians in the same countries ranked even lower overall.

State Has Expanded Its Efforts in Muslim-majority Countries Since September 11

Since September 11, State has expanded its efforts in Muslim-majority countries that are considered strategically important in the war on terrorism. State significantly increased the program funding and number of Foreign Service officers in its bureaus of South Asian and Near Eastern Affairs. State has also launched a number of new initiatives targeting broader, younger audiences—particularly in predominantly Muslim countries—and plans to continue these initiatives in the future. These initiatives include expanding exchange programs targeting citizens of Muslim countries, informing foreign publics about U.S. policies in the war on terrorism, and demonstrating that Americans and Muslims share certain values.

State Increased Resources in Muslim-majority Countries

State has increased its public diplomacy resources overall since September 11, with the largest relative overseas increases going to Muslim-majority countries. In the two fiscal years since September 11, State's public diplomacy resources increased from $544 million in fiscal year 2001 to $594 million in fiscal year 2003, or about 9 percent in real terms. During the same period, the number of authorized Foreign Service officers involved in public diplomacy overseas also increased, from 484 to 539,[10] or approximately 11 percent. While State's bureau of Europe and Eurasia still receives the largest overall share of overseas public diplomacy resources, the largest percentage increases in such resources since September 11 occurred in State's bureaus of South Asian and Near Eastern Affairs, where many countries have significant Muslim populations.[11] Public diplomacy funding increased in South Asia from $24 million to $39 million and in the Near East from $39 million to $62 million, or by 63 and 58 percent, respectively. During the same period, authorized American Foreign Service

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[10]This number includes authorized Regional English Language Officers overseas and authorized Information Officers overseas. Authorized positions for domestic public diplomacy officers and Foreign Service nationals overseas totaled approximately 688 and 1,702, respectively, in fiscal year 2003. These numbers have remained relatively static since September 11.

[11]These countries include Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

officers in South Asia increased from 27 to 31 and in the Near East from 45 to 57, or by 15 percent and 27 percent, respectively. Table 1 shows the increases in public diplomacy resources by region from fiscal year 2001 through 2003.

Table 1: Increases in Public Diplomacy Resources by Region for Fiscal Years 2001 through 2003

(Dollars in millions)

Regions	2001	2003[a]	Percentage change
South Asia			
Funding	$24	$39	63%
Authorized officers	27	31	15%
Near East			
Funding	$39	$62	58%
Authorized officers	45	57	27%
Africa			
Funding	$55	$65	18%
Authorized officers	79	89	13%
East Asia and the Pacific			
Funding	$78	$86	9%
Authorized officers	80	83	4%
Western Hemisphere			
Funding	$77	$80	4%
Authorized officers	92	99	8%
Europe and Eurasia[b]			
Funding	$161	$160	0%
Authorized officers	161	180	12%

Source: State Department.

[a]The 2003 funding estimates include approximately $20 million in reprogrammed funds for educational and cultural exchanges from 2002

[b]Estimates for Europe and Eurasia include costs for two staff assigned to the European Office of the UN and Other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland.

More Resources Directed to Exchange and Information Programs Focusing on the Muslim World	In 2002, State redirected 5 percent of its exchange resources to better support the war on terrorism and to strengthen U.S. engagement with Muslim countries. In 2003, State has continued to emphasize exchanges with Muslim countries through its Partnership for Learning Program— designed to target young and diverse audiences through academic and professional exchanges such as the Fulbright, International Visitor, and Citizen Exchange programs. State has also carried out increased exchanges through its Middle East Partnership Initiative, which includes computer and English language training for women newly employed by the Afghan government and a program to assist women from Arab countries and elsewhere in observing and discussing the U.S. electoral process.

State's Office of International Information Programs has also developed new initiatives to support the war on terrorism. It expanded its interactive Web site in Arabic, Persian, and other languages to inform broad audiences about U.S. policy initiatives, including the war on terrorism. It launched a new Web site to provide information on changes in U.S. visa policies and immigration procedures after September 11, including those that predominantly affect citizens of Muslim-majority countries. It employed staff to monitor Arab television and news reports for misinformation and hostile propaganda targeted at the United States and to counter that information by presenting the facts through various media. In addition, it developed several products to support the war on terror including the following:

- a print and electronic pamphlet titled *The Network of Terrorism*, distributed in 36 languages via hard copy, the Web, and media throughout the world, which documented the direct link between the September 11 perpetrators and al Qaeda;

- a publication titled *Iraq: From Fear to Freedom* to inform foreign audiences of the administration's policies toward Iraq;

- a print and electronic pamphlet titled *Voices for Freedom* in which Iraq-born professionals describe the brutality of Saddam Hussein's regime and their hopes for Iraq's future;

- an Arabic youth magazine; and

- an 18-minute documentary dubbed in eight languages titled *Rebuilding Afghanistan*, which depicts U.S. and allied efforts in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Media Campaign Highlights Shared Values

In 2002, State's Bureau of Public Affairs launched a campaign called Shared Values to stimulate dialogue and increase understanding between Americans and people from predominantly Muslim countries. State developed a series of five short-form minidocumentaries to demonstrate that the United States is an open society and not at war with Islam, and that Americans and Muslims share certain values and beliefs. These minidocumentaries were dubbed in Arabic, Bahasa, Urdu, and French. State aired them via paid media for about 5 weeks during the holy month of Ramadan in Indonesia, Pakistan, Kuwait, and Malaysia. Several countries—Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon—did not allow State to air the documentaries because they viewed them as U.S. government propaganda. However, State also aired the documentaries on Pan Arab media, which consists of satellite broadcasts that reach audiences in a number of Arab countries, including Egypt and Lebanon. State estimates that the program reached approximately 288 million people in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia.

To complement the paid media campaign, State disseminated print and electronic pamphlets and other materials on the theme of Muslim life in America; sent speakers to Kuwait, Lebanon, and Jordan to promote additional interest in the Shared Values initiative; and held a satellite town hall meeting between Americans and Indonesians. State also worked with the Council of Muslim Americans for Understanding to create an interactive Web site, in multiple languages, called "Open Dialogue." The site is intended to create a forum for dialogue between Muslim Americans and other Muslims of the world.

Plans for Future Programs in Muslim Countries Under Way

State's Public Affairs Bureau will continue its Shared Values program by conducting additional research, developing media products, and conducting public relations efforts in the Muslim world. State plans to work with private voluntary organizations, USAID, U.S. businesses, and international journalists and broadcasters to develop print, video, and other television stories to inform large audiences about U.S.-led initiatives in developing countries. For example, in Egypt, where State did not air the minidocumentaries, it worked with local Egyptian TV and the Egyptian government to air three stories of USAID projects in the country. State plans to continue partnerships with USAID and other entities to demonstrate American generosity to audiences in Muslim-majority countries and the rest of the world.

State has developed other plans and programs for the future that emphasize a broader and younger audience in predominantly Muslim countries. State's plans include exchange programs for high school students with significant Muslim populations and expanded English teaching programs to communicate American values to audiences overseas. State plans to make more information available in Farsi and South Asian languages. It also plans to dedicate 15 percent of its Speaker Program budget to an "Impact Series" that will focus on key themes, one of the first being "Outreach to the Muslim World." In addition, State is working with the Smithsonian Institution to develop 15 multimedia exhibits called "American Corners," which will provide access to reference materials on the United States in selected Muslim-majority countries.

State Lacks a Strategy for Public Diplomacy Programs

The growth in programs to the Muslim world marks State's recognition of the need to increase diplomatic channels to this population. However, State lacks a comprehensive and commonly understood public diplomacy strategy to guide implementation of these programs. The absence of an integrated strategy could impede State's ability to direct its multifaceted efforts toward concrete and measurable progress. Furthermore, there is no interagency public diplomacy strategy to guide State's and all federal agencies' communication efforts. This limits the government's ability to convey consistent messages to overseas audiences and thus achieve mutually reinforcing benefits.

State Does Not Have an Integrated Public Diplomacy Strategy

After September 11, State acknowledged the lack of, and need for, a strategy that integrates all of its diverse public diplomacy activities and directs them toward common objectives. However, the strategy is still in the development stage. The Acting Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs told us that she is creating a new office of strategic planning to lead this effort. She said it was too early to predict when such a strategy might be completed. She also noted that, when the new Undersecretary is appointed, the direction of the strategy could change.

State officials told us that such a strategy is particularly important because State's public diplomacy operation is fragmented among the various organizational entities within the agency. Public affairs officers who responded to our survey indicated that the lack of a strategy has hindered their ability to effectively execute public diplomacy efforts overseas. More than 66 percent of public affairs officers in one region reported that the
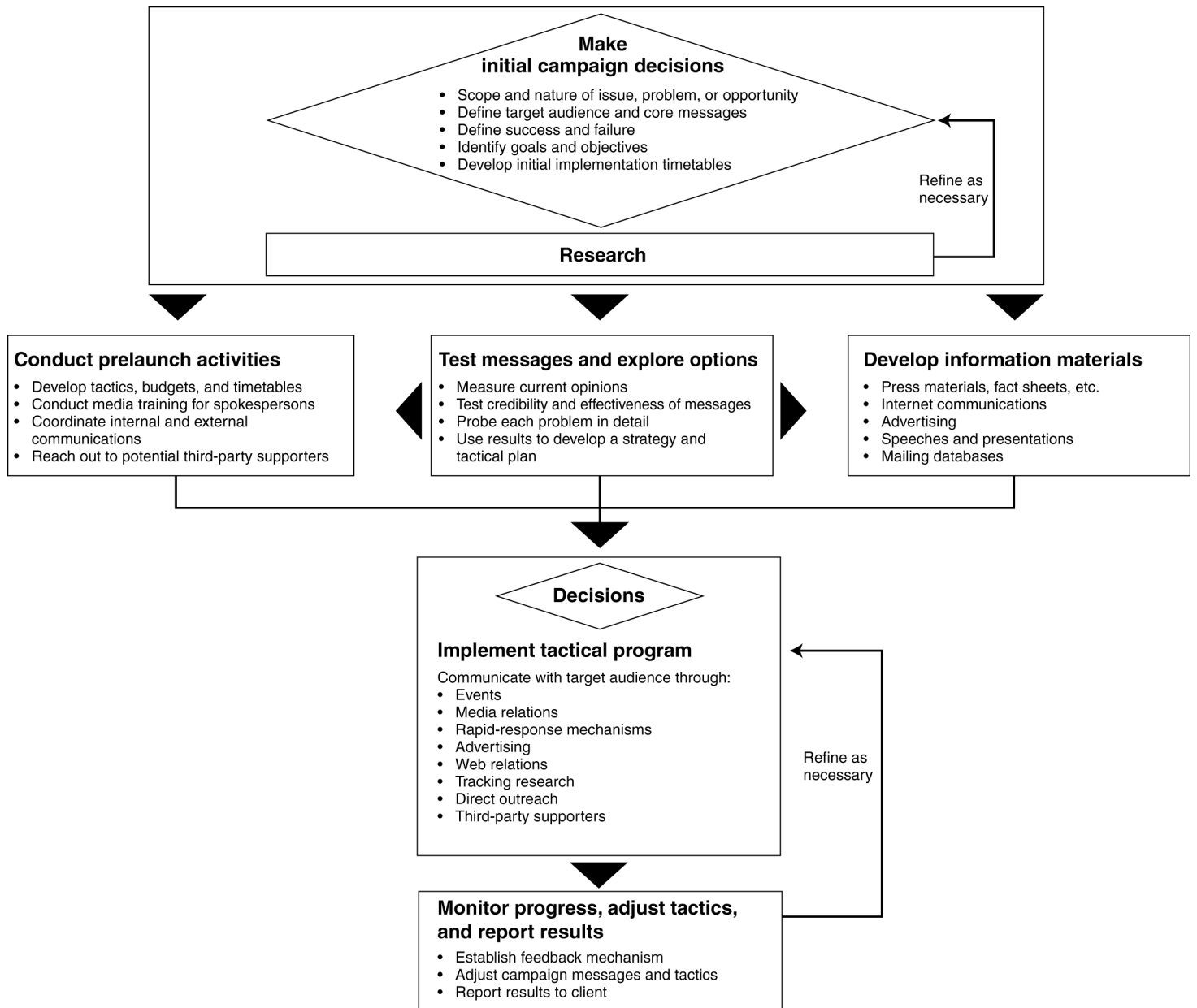
quality of strategic guidance from the Office of the Undersecretary in the last year and a half was generally insufficient or very insufficient. More than 40 percent in another region reported the same. We encountered similar complaints during our overseas fieldwork. For example, in Morocco, the former public affairs officer stated that so little information had been provided from Washington on State's post-September 11 public diplomacy strategy that he had to rely on newspaper articles and guesswork to formulate his in-country public diplomacy plans.

Private Sector Public Relations Tools Could Be Relevant to State's Needs

Private sector public relations efforts and political campaigns use sophisticated strategies to integrate complex communication efforts, involving multiple players. Although State's public diplomacy efforts extend beyond the activities of public relations firms, many of the strategic tools that such firms employ are relevant to State's situation.

We held a roundtable discussion with some of the largest public relations firms in the United States to identify the key strategic components of their efforts. According to these executives, initial strategic decisions involve establishing the scope and nature of the problem, identifying the target audience, determining the core messages, and defining both success and failure. Subsequent steps include conducting research to validate the initial decisions, testing the core messages, carrying out prelaunch activities, and developing information materials. Each of these elements contains numerous other steps. Only when these steps are completed may the tactical program be implemented. Further, the program must be implemented while continuously measuring progress and adjusting tactics accordingly. Figure 4 illustrates the elements of a typical public relations strategy.

Figure 4: Elements of a Typical Public Relations Strategy

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                 ╱      ╲
        Make initial campaign decisions
        • Scope and nature of issue, problem, or opportunity
        • Define target audience and core messages
        • Define success and failure
        • Identify goals and objectives
        • Develop initial implementation timetables
                                                    Refine as
                                                    necessary
        Research
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Conduct prelaunch activities
- Develop tactics, budgets, and timetables
- Conduct media training for spokespersons
- Coordinate internal and external communications
- Reach out to potential third-party supporters

Test messages and explore options
- Measure current opinions
- Test credibility and effectiveness of messages
- Probe each problem in detail
- Use results to develop a strategy and tactical plan

Develop information materials
- Press materials, fact sheets, etc.
- Internet communications
- Advertising
- Speeches and presentations
- Mailing databases

Decisions

Implement tactical program

Communicate with target audience through:
- Events
- Media relations
- Rapid-response mechanisms
- Advertising
- Web relations
- Tracking research
- Direct outreach
- Third-party supporters

Refine as necessary

Monitor progress, adjust tactics, and report results
- Establish feedback mechanism
- Adjust campaign messages and tactics
- Report results to client

Source: GAO, developed from Weber Shandwick.

The private sector officials emphasized the importance of synchronizing these activities in a systematic way so that the efforts are mutually reinforcing in advancing the campaign's overall objectives. They pointed out that, without a carefully integrated plan, the various elements are at risk of canceling one another out and possibly even damaging the overall campaign.

A report by the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy[12] and one issued in 2002 by the United Kingdom-based Foreign Policy Center[13] emphasized the importance of employing communications consultants, pollsters, and media specialists to provide relevant expertise to State on media trends, market trends, production techniques, and emerging technologies. A report published by the Council on Foreign Relations[14] also recommended increased private sector involvement, including the creation of an independent, not-for-profit, Corporation for Public Diplomacy. The officials who participated in our roundtable indicated a high level of interest in State's public diplomacy efforts and conveyed their willingness to assist State in developing its strategy.

Interagency Public Diplomacy Strategy Has Not Been Established

To date, an interagency public diplomacy strategy that sets forth the messages and means for governmentwide communication efforts to overseas audiences has not been implemented. Because of their differing roles and missions, the White House, State, and other public diplomacy players often focus on different audiences and use varying means to communicate with them. The idea of an interagency strategy would be to consider the foreign publics in key countries and regions, the relevant U.S. national interests there, what U.S. government communication channels are available, and how to optimize their use in conveying desired themes and messages.

The lack of an interagency strategy complicates the task of conveying consistent messages and thus achieving mutually reinforcing benefits.

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[12]U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, *Building America's Public Diplomacy Through a Reformed Structure and Additional Resources* (Washington, D.C.: September 2002).

[13]Mark Leonard, Foreign Policy Center, *Public Diplomacy* (London, United Kingdom: 2002).

[14]Independent Task Force on Public Diplomacy, *Public Diplomacy: A Strategy for Reform*, Council on Foreign Relations, (July 30, 2002).

State officials told us that, without such a strategy, the risk of making communication mistakes that are damaging to U.S. public diplomacy efforts is high. They also said that the lack of a strategy diminishes the efficiency and effectiveness of governmentwide public diplomacy efforts. Reports by the Defense Science Board Task Force,[15] the Council on Foreign Relations,[16] and Wilton Park[17]—an executive agency of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as well as reports by the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy[18] and National Defense University,[19] concluded that a sophisticated interagency communications strategy is needed to synchronize agencies' target audience assessments, messages, and capabilities.

Our overseas fieldwork in Egypt and Morocco underlined the importance of interagency coordination. Embassy officers there told us that only a very small percentage of the population was aware of the magnitude of U.S. assistance being provided to their countries. Egypt is the second largest recipient of U.S. assistance in the world, with assistance totaling more than an estimated $1.9 billion in 2003. Assistance to Morocco totaled more than an estimated $13 million in 2003. USAID and embassy officials in both countries are currently testing new approaches and cooperating more closely to better publicize USAID's efforts; however, they noted that the idea of USAID taking a more aggressive role in promoting its work was not necessarily universally supported within USAID.

Most interagency communication coordination efforts have been ad hoc in recent years. Immediately after September 11, the White House, State Department, Department of Defense, and other agencies coordinated various public diplomacy efforts on a day-to-day basis, and the White House established a number of interim coordination mechanisms. One

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[15]Defense Science Board Task Force, *Managed Information Dissemination* (Washington, D.C.: October 2001).

[16]*Public Diplomacy: A Strategy for Reform.*

[17]Wilton Park, *Changing Perceptions: Review of Public Diplomacy* (United Kingdom: March 2002).

[18]U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, *Building America's Public Diplomacy through a Reformed Structure and Additional Resources* (Washington, D.C.: September 2002).

[19]National Defense University, *Winning with Words: Strategic Communications and the War on Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: 2002).

such mechanism was the joint operation of the Coalition Information Centers in Washington, London, and Islamabad, set up during the early stages of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan in 2001. The centers were designed to provide a rapid response capability for correcting inaccurate news stories, proactively dealing with news items likely to generate negative responses overseas, and optimizing reporting of news favorable to U.S. efforts.

More recently, the White House established a more permanent coordination mechanism. On January 21, 2003, the President issued an executive order forming the White House Office of Global Communications. The office is intended to coordinate strategic communications from the U.S. government to overseas audiences. The President also established a Strategic Communication Policy Coordinating Committee, co-chaired by the State Department and the National Security Council and to work closely with the Office of Global Communications, to ensure interagency coordination in disseminating the American message across the globe. It is the committee's long-term objective to develop a National Communications Strategy. One high-level State official told us that the war in Iraq had delayed efforts to develop the strategy, and that it would not be in place until September 2003 at the earliest.

State Lacks Measurable Indicators of Progress Toward Public Diplomacy Goals

State is not systematically and comprehensively measuring progress toward its public diplomacy goals. Its overseas performance measurement efforts focus on anecdotal evidence and program outputs, rather than gauging progress toward changing foreign publics' understanding and attitudes about the United States. Public affairs officers responding to our survey reported that their missions had insufficient staff to conduct systematic program evaluations. In addition, limited availability and use of polling data hamper State's ability to track progress. Although it is difficult to establish direct links between public diplomacy programs and results, other U.S. government agencies and the private sector have some best practices for assessing information dissemination campaigns, including the need to define success and how it should be measured.

State's Current Performance Plan Does Not Include Measurable Indicators of Progress

State's current performance plan does not feature measurable indicators of progress toward public diplomacy goals. State's agencywide fiscal year 2003 performance plan includes a wide range of public diplomacy activities that are used to address various strategic goals, but the plan directly

addresses only one type of public diplomacy activity—educational and cultural exchanges—as a specific strategic and performance goal in and of itself. The performance indicator that State cites for this goal does not address the ultimate outcomes that are desired for these programs. For example, State reported that 94 percent of exchange program participants viewed their experiences as valuable, based on "highly successful or valuable" ratings in program evaluations.[20] While it is useful to know that participants' experiences were favorable, this information does not demonstrate progress toward the more fundamental objective of achieving changes in understanding and attitudes about the United States.

While State plans to improve its public diplomacy measures in 2004, its plans still lack some important elements. For example, State cites the intended use of independent surveys and polls to determine the success of its programs, but it does not define what would constitute success, nor does it specify what the surveys would measure or the frequency of measurement. In other cases, State cites targets that are too vague to measure. For example, its plans for evaluating international information programs include the target, "evidence shows that information provided has reached the intended user." State officials acknowledged that these indicators and targets were not measurable and stated they are working to develop more quantitative indicators that can be measured. State also plans to measure public diplomacy performance on a global basis rather than by geographic region, as called for by the Office of Management and Budget.

Overseas Performance Measurement Efforts Emphasize Anecdotes and Program Activity

While performance measurement efforts at individual overseas posts vary greatly, many focus on anecdotes or the amount of program activity in their host country. For instance, posts might report on foreign press coverage of conferences and speakers sponsored by U.S. embassies; on favorable articles written by foreign journalists after they complete tours in the United States; or on the activities of other former exchange program participants. State has developed a database for posts to record anecdotal evidence of results in specific instances. However, posts are not required to follow up on exchange program participants on a systematic or periodic basis. Other posts simply count the number of public diplomacy activities that take place in their host country. For example, some posts tally the number of speeches given by the ambassador or the number of news

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[20]This figure was reported in State's most recent performance and accountability report, for fiscal year 2002.

articles placed in the host-country media. While such measures shed light on the level of public diplomacy activity, they reveal little in the way of overall program effectiveness.

Overseas Posts Not Required to Report Whether Performance Targets Are Met

Notwithstanding the relative usefulness of individual posts' performance measurement efforts, there are currently no reporting requirements in place to determine whether posts' performance targets are actually met. At one overseas post we visited, the post had identified polling data showing that only 22 percent of the host-country's citizens had a favorable view of the United States. The post used that figure as a baseline with yearly percentage increases set as targets. However, the former public affairs officer at the post told us that he did not attempt to determine or report on whether the post had actually achieved these targets because there was no requirement to do so. Officials at the other two overseas posts we visited also cited the lack of any formal reporting requirement for following up on whether they met their annual performance targets. Officials in State's Office of Strategic and Performance Planning said that such a requirement is currently under consideration.

Insufficient Data and Resources Hinder Performance Measurement

Public affairs officers at U.S. embassies generally do not conduct systematic program evaluations. Moreover, they noted that measuring the impact of public diplomacy programs is difficult because the full effects of such programs may not be known for years. For example, tracking the activities of former exchange program participants over the course of many years is a labor-intensive effort. About 79 percent of the respondents to our survey reported that staffing at their missions was insufficient to conduct systematic program evaluations. Many officers also reported that staffing at posts was insufficient to carry out the long-range monitoring required to adequately measure program effectiveness. Some officers said that this is especially problematic at smaller posts, where public diplomacy sections may consist of very few Foreign Service officers.

Even if sufficient staffing were available, State would still have difficulty conducting long-range tracking of exchange participants because it lacks a database with comprehensive information on its various exchange program alumni. Although State's records are better for more recent exchange participants, its ability to locate individuals who participated prior to 1996 is limited. State had planned to begin building a new worldwide alumni database with comprehensive data, but Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs officials told us that State had received insufficient funds to do so.

State officials told us that the new database would require about $600,000 in additional funding.[21] State is currently considering less costly alternatives that involve using its existing information systems. For example, State has hired contractors to review the paper archives of exchange programs and convert alumni data to electronic form. However, bureau officials said they lack the funds to conduct the type of outreach necessary to verify and update alumni addresses and other information. They estimated that such an outreach effort would require approximately $3.4 million in additional funding.[22] State is requesting two new positions to assist in the administration of alumni activities.

State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs surveys exchange program participants on their program experiences, their activities afterwards, and their impressions of the programs' effects on them. The bureau uses these and other data to evaluate specific exchange programs every 5 to 7 years on a rotating basis. The bureau has also recently initiated an effort to ask individuals who have completed exchange programs to recall specific attitudes and knowledge before the programs and how those had changed as a result of the programs. However, for most of its exchange programs, State does not systematically conduct pre- and post-program surveys that directly test and compare participant attitudes and knowledge before and after participation. Evaluation experts in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs acknowledged that conducting such surveys would provide more meaningful data on the effectiveness of exchange programs, but bureau officials estimated that such an approach would require approximately $2.2 million annually to pretest all alumni about their attitudes. It would also require two additional staff persons or hiring an evaluation firm to help with the data collection and analysis.

Limited Polling Data Make Progress Assessments Difficult

A number of public affairs officers suggested that expanded use of overseas opinion research would provide a useful basis for measuring public diplomacy progress. Private sector officials from public relations and opinion research firms and the Ad Council agreed. Common public relations firm measurement techniques include surveys and polling to develop baseline data, immediate follow-up research, and additional

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[21]This money was cut from the fiscal year 2004 request, but State intends to request it again in fiscal year 2005.

[22]Funding for this program was also cut from the fiscal year 2004 request.

tracking polls over a period of time to identify long-term changes. Reports by the Council on Foreign Relations,[23] Wilton Park,[24] and the Defense Science Board Task Force[25] also emphasized the need for increased use of foreign opinion research for public diplomacy efforts. The officials who attended our roundtable noted that incorporating performance measurement so pervasively into a campaign is costly. However, this cost is considered essential to the campaign's success. The officials estimated that, based on their experience with similar information campaigns, of State's roughly $500 million to $600 million public diplomacy budget, $30 million to $50 million should be spent on opinion research and performance measurement. State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research currently spends about $3.5 million annually on overseas opinion research.

The director of the Office of Research in State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research said that, with additional funding, State could more regularly monitor foreign opinion overseas. Although State conducts overseas opinion research on foreign perceptions of the United States and its foreign policy in all but a handful of countries, it does not have sufficient funds to conduct more than one or two surveys in each country per year. The director told us that, in certain high priority countries, he would like to conduct monthly surveys to track fast-changing circumstances. Focus group studies in high priority countries would also be helpful in providing more in-depth analyses of attitudes. The official estimated that increased polling and focus groups in high priority countries would require an estimated $1.5 million in additional annual funding. State could also employ advanced "data mining" technology that would combine data collected in State's research with that of other surveys to detect patterns that would help researchers tie trends and shifts in opinion to specific events and efforts. The official estimated that such technology would require a one-time investment of roughly $1 million and an ongoing annual cost of about $75,000. State could also explore using the Internet to conduct overseas surveys, as a complement to conventional polling efforts. The official said that this project could be launched for as little as $200,000.

Even the limited polling that State does conduct is not fully utilized by public affairs officers overseas. About 46 percent of our survey

[23] *Public Diplomacy: A Strategy for Reform.*

[24] *Changing Perceptions: Review of Public Diplomacy.*

[25] *Managed Information Dissemination.*

respondents reported that they rarely, if ever, receive such data. Thus, they may not always be aware of changes in foreign audiences' attitudes toward the United States. The Broadcasting Board of Governors also conducts audience research efforts in a number of foreign countries that could be useful to public affairs officers. However, in regions of the world where the Board broadcasts its programs, more than 91 percent of our survey respondents reported that they rarely, if ever, receive such data. State officials told us that they provide both the State polling data and the broadcasting audience research data to the public diplomacy office directors in State's regional bureaus. However, it is up to each regional bureau to review the data and ensure that it reaches the appropriate public affairs officers overseas. State officials told us that some regional bureaus are probably more diligent in doing so than others, and that some public affairs officers may not even be aware that such data are available to them. State plans to emphasize the availability of such data in new public training courses it is developing at the Foreign Service Institute.

Other U.S. Government Agencies and the Private Sector Offer Strategies for Assessing Performance

A recent GAO report on strategies for assessing U.S. government information dissemination efforts recognized that establishing a causal link between agency actions and the ultimate impact of such programs is difficult.[26] However, the report points out that by systematically identifying the incremental outcomes expected at each step, U.S. government agencies were able to construct a logical framework, or logic model, that demonstrated how achieving short and intermediate outcome goals could lead to a certain level of assurance that expected results would be realized. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention constructed a logic model to gauge the reinforcing effects of media and community-based campaigns to reduce tobacco use. Short and intermediate outcome goals included changes in knowledge and attitudes about tobacco use, adherence to and enforcement of no-smoking regulations, reduced smoking initiation among young people, and increased smoking cessation among adults. Long-term outcomes included decreased smoking, reduced exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, and reduced tobacco-related mortality. In State's case, short-term outcomes for public diplomacy programs could include target audience knowledge and awareness of U.S. principles, beliefs, and policies. Intermediate outcomes could include positive changes

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[26]U.S. General Accounting Office, *Program Evaluation: Strategies for Assessing How Information Dissemination Contributes to Agency Goals*, GAO-02-923 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 30, 2002).

in attitude toward specific U.S. policies. Long-term outcomes could include implementation of U.S. foreign policy issues prompted by U.S. public diplomacy programs such as educational and cultural exchanges.

The private sector officials with whom we met agreed with our assessment of the difficulty in establishing direct causal links between public diplomacy programs and results. However, they noted that establishing convincing correlations is a reasonable expectation. For example, to measure the effectiveness of a campaign to promote the use of seat belts, the Ad Council conducted precampaign attitudinal surveys to gauge awareness and understanding of the importance of wearing seat belts and then administered weekly surveys during the campaign to track the progression of attitude shifts. It also counted the number of Web site hits and 1-800 telephone calls that occurred in response to the campaign. Ad Council officials told us that they ultimately established correlations between these measures and Department of Transportation statistics on seat belt deaths. Ad Council and other private sector officials said that, to establish such correlations, effectiveness measures must be incorporated into every aspect of a program from its outset. The officials emphasized that before a program is even launched, evaluators should establish a definition for success; identify priorities; and determine what should be measured, how it should be measured, and how frequently.

Although State's public diplomacy efforts extend beyond information dissemination, many of the logic model concepts would still be applicable to State's situation. Such an approach could be particularly useful in evaluating the combined effect of State's wide-ranging public diplomacy activities. Our report noted that for comprehensive initiatives that combine various approaches to achieving a goal, a logic model can help articulate how those approaches are intended to assist and supplement one another. Evaluations of performance can then assess the effects of an integrated set of efforts. The lack of an integrated system for measuring public diplomacy performance hinders State's ability to correct its course of action or to direct resources toward activities that offer a greater likelihood of success. Officials in State's Educational and Cultural Affairs bureau told us that they are currently in the process of developing a performance measurement system for the bureau's exchange programs that includes the components identified in our report.

State Faces Other Significant Challenges

State's public diplomacy efforts face some additional significant challenges. Among them are insufficient time and staffing resources to conduct public diplomacy tasks. Public affairs officers also reported that burdensome administrative and budgetary processes often divert their attention from public diplomacy programs. A significant number of Foreign Service officers involved in public diplomacy efforts overseas lack sufficient foreign language skills. In addition, many public affairs officers reported that the amount of time available to attend public diplomacy training is inadequate.

Insufficient Time and Staff

More than 40 percent of the public affairs officers we surveyed reported that the amount of time they had to devote exclusively to executing public diplomacy tasks was insufficient. During our overseas fieldwork, officers told us that, while they manage to attend U.S. and other foreign embassy receptions and functions within their host country capitals, it was particularly difficult to find time to travel outside the capitals to interact with ordinary citizens. Some officers said they were too busy and there was not enough staff to take such trips. More than 50 percent of those responding to our survey reported that the number of Foreign Service officers available to perform public diplomacy duties was inadequate. Although State increased the actual number of Americans in public diplomacy positions overseas from 414 in fiscal year 2000 to 448 in fiscal year 2002, State still had a shortfall of public diplomacy staff in 2002, based on the projected needs identified in State's latest overseas staffing model. In 2002, State's overseas staffing model projected the need for 512 staff in these positions; however, 64 of these positions, or 13 percent, were not filled. [27]

We reported in 2002[28] that as part of its Diplomatic Readiness Initiative, State has launched an aggressive recruiting program to rebuild the department's total workforce. Under this initiative, State requested 1,158 new employees above attrition over the 3-year period for fiscal years 2002 through 2004. However, it does not have numerical targets for specific skill

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[27]State's overseas staffing model operates on a 2-year cycle. Fiscal year 2002 is the latest year for which data are available on the numbers of positions actually filled.

[28]U.S. General Accounting Office, *State Department: Staffing Shortfalls and Ineffective Assignment System Compromise Diplomatic Readiness at Hardship Posts*, GAO-02-626 (Washington, D.C.: June 18, 2002).

requirements such as language proficiency or regional expertise. Although State officials are optimistic that enough new hires are being brought in to address the overall staffing shortage, there are no assurances that the recruiting efforts will result in the right people with the right skills needed to meet specific critical shortfalls.

Burdensome Administrative and Budgetary Processes

Officers responding to our survey, those with whom we met overseas, and numerous other State officials also pointed to the amount of extra time public diplomacy practitioners are required to spend on administrative, budgetary, and personnel matters due to the unique nature of the program. They indicated that these processes had been a particular problem for embassy public affairs sections since the former USIA merged with State in 1999. At that time, USIA's administrative personnel who were familiar with the administrative requirements of public diplomacy activities became part of State's administrative operations in Washington and at embassies overseas and were no longer dedicated solely to public diplomacy activities. Public affairs officers said that State's administrative processes were often too slow and inflexible to handle the logistics and timing required to set up media and cultural events and other program activities. Because these activities are so different from those conducted in the course of traditional government-to-government diplomacy, State management officers are often unfamiliar with them.

For example, embassy public affairs section officials in one country told us that the planned filming of USAID projects was held up because embassy procedures did not allow making advance cash payments to the television crew. Instead, the embassy preferred either making electronic fund transfers in dollars or issuing checks. The officials noted that, unlike in the United States, businesses in the developing world usually demand cash payments in advance because they do not have sufficient working capital to provide services and then wait for payment. Also, the businesses often do not have bank accounts that can accept electronic fund transfers in dollars. In this case, getting the television crew paid and working required the head of the public affairs section to become personally involved in persuading the embassy administrative section to act.

Public affairs officers told us that this example is typical and that having to continually intervene in resolving routine administrative issues leaves them less time to actually conduct public diplomacy efforts. State officials told us they recognized the problem and had designated certain administrative personnel at some embassies to work with public affairs sections to reduce

the time spent by those sections on administrative matters. However, the officials said there were still insufficient numbers of such designated personnel.

Shortfalls in Foreign Language Skills

Insufficient foreign language skills pose another problem for many officers. As of December 31, 2002, 21 percent of the 332 Foreign Service officers filling "language-designated" public diplomacy positions overseas did not meet the foreign language speaking requirements of their positions.[29] The highest percentages not meeting the requirements were in the Near East, where 30 percent of the officers did not meet the requirement. Although State had no language-designated positions for South Asia, it had eight language-preferred[30] positions, none of which were filled by officers who had reading or speaking capability in those languages. It is important to note that most of the foreign languages required in these two regions are considered difficult to master, such as Arabic and Urdu. In contrast, 85 percent of the officers filling French language-designated positions and 97 percent of those filling Spanish language-designated ones met the requirements. Officers' opinions on the quality of the foreign language training they received also varied greatly by region. For example, 67 percent of the officers in one region reported that the quality of language training was either generally or very sufficient, while 67 percent in another region reported that training quality was generally or very insufficient.[31]

Foreign Service officers posted at the overseas embassies we visited and other State officials told us that having fluency in a host country's language is important for effectively conducting public diplomacy. The foreign government officials with whom we met in Egypt, Morocco, and the United Kingdom agreed. They noted that, even in countries where English is widely understood, speaking the host country's language demonstrates respect for its people and its culture. In Morocco, officers in the public

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[29]Language-designated positions are graded for both speaking and reading proficiency. Most officers who do not meet one requirement do not meet the other one either, so the percentages are similar. For purposes of clarity, our figures refer only to the requirements for speaking proficiency.

[30]These are positions for which language capability is preferred but not required.

[31]GAO reported on the insufficient language proficiency of Foreign Service officers in 2002. See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Foreign Languages: Human Capital Approach Needed to Correct Staffing and Proficiency Shortfalls*, GAO-02-375 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 31, 2002).

affairs and other sections of the embassy told us that, because their ability to speak Arabic was poor, they conducted most embassy business in French. French is widely used in that country, especially in business and government. However, embassy officers told us that speaking Arabic would provide superior entrée to the Moroccan public. The ability to speak country-specific forms of Arabic and other more obscure dialects would generate even more goodwill, especially outside the major cities.

Some Foreign Affairs officers pointed to State's policy of limiting most overseas tours to 2 or 3 years as a factor that contributes to insufficient language skills. They also said this policy makes it more difficult to cultivate personal relationships that in some countries take a long time to develop. They noted that the diplomatic corps of some other countries with major overseas diplomatic presences allow longer overseas tours and that their diplomats demonstrate superior foreign language skills as a result. Officers at the embassies we visited also noted that, because public diplomacy efforts should and often do involve political and economic officers and others outside the public affairs section, it is important that they be proficient in host country languages as well. A number of officers in these other sections told us that language proficiency was a problem for them as well.[32] State officials told us that they are aware of this concern but that they rely on tools other than lengthened tours of duty to foster language skills, such as offering pay incentives to officers who are proficient in foreign languages used in certain countries. Also, they said officers who have the required language proficiency have a competitive advantage over those who do not in bidding for overseas positions.

According to the department, the largest and most significant factor limiting its ability to fill language-designated positions is its long-standing staffing shortfall. As mentioned above, State's Diplomatic Readiness Initiative is designed to replenish the ranks. Other planned actions include bolstering efforts to recruit job candidates with target language skills, sending language training supervisors to posts to determine ways to improve training offerings, and developing a new "language continuum" plan to guide efforts to meet the need for higher levels of competency in all languages, especially those critical to national security concerns.

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[32]State would not provide updated information on the language proficiency of officers outside the public diplomacy cone, as they considered this information to be outside the scope of our review.

Little Time for Training

Time to attend public diplomacy training presents another challenge. About 58 percent of the officers responding to our survey reported that the amount of time available for such training is inadequate. In September 2003, State plans to launch a new public diplomacy training program, increasing the current 3 weeks of available public diplomacy training to 19. It has also added public diplomacy components to its training curriculum for certain officers outside the public diplomacy cone, including economic and political officers, ambassadors, and deputy chiefs of mission. Nonetheless, officers told us that unless a significant "float" of Foreign Service officer staffing is established for training, it would be difficult for officers to attend the training. They noted that many of their posts had positions that were vacant for some time before they began their tour there. Under these circumstances, there was tremendous pressure to begin their tours as soon as possible, leaving little or no time for training. State is expecting staffing increases resulting from the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative to enable it to create a "training float" that will allow staff sufficient time to receive training in foreign languages and other key skills.

Conclusions

Since the war on terrorism began, the need for a positive American message to the world has never been more important. Opinion research reveals that many foreign publics, especially those in Muslim-majority countries, have highly unfavorable perceptions of the United States, and State has sought to enhance its public diplomacy efforts in these countries. But the absence of an integrated and commonly understood strategy for State's public diplomacy efforts makes it difficult for State to direct its diverse efforts in a systematic manner to achieve measurable results. The methods and techniques of private sector public relations campaigns merit consideration in developing and implementing such a strategy. Also, because State is not systematically and comprehensively measuring progress toward its public diplomacy goals, its ability to correct its course of action or to direct resources toward activities that offer a greater likelihood of success is limited. While the difficulty of measuring State's long-term influence on audiences overseas should not be underestimated, private sector public relations firms and other U.S. government agencies provide some reasonable examples of where to begin. Shortfalls in staffing, burdensome administrative and budgeting processes, Foreign Service officers with insufficient foreign language proficiency, and insufficient time for public diplomacy training pose additional challenges for State.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To improve the planning, coordination, execution, and assessment of U.S. public diplomacy efforts, we recommend that the Secretary of State

- develop and widely disseminate throughout the department a strategy that considers the techniques of private sector public relations firms in integrating all of State's public diplomacy efforts and directing them toward achieving common and measurable objectives;

- consider ways to collaborate with the private sector to employ best practices for measuring efforts to inform and influence target audiences, including expanded use of opinion research and better use of existing research;

- designate more administrative positions to overseas public affairs sections to reduce the administrative burden;

- strengthen efforts to train Foreign Service officers in foreign languages; and

- program adequate time for public diplomacy training into State's assignment process.
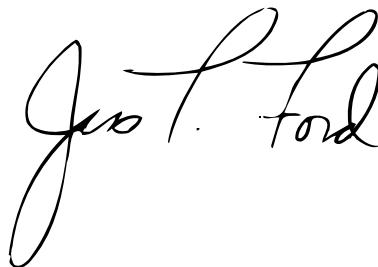
Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

State provided written comments on a draft of this report (see app. IV). State generally concurred with the report's observations and conclusions. State said that it intends to implement our recommendations and that it has already begun taking measures to do so in some areas.

While State agreed with our recommendation to consider ways to employ private sector best practices for measuring the effectiveness of its public diplomacy efforts, it said that the report did not adequately describe the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' efforts to gauge the effectiveness of exchange programs. We have incorporated additional information on these efforts into the report.

We are sending copies of this report to other interested members of Congress, the Secretary of State, and the Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. We also will make copies available to others upon request. In addition, this 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) 512-4128. Other GAO contacts and staff acknowledgments are listed in appendix V.

Jess T. Ford
Director, International Affairs and Trade

Scope and Methodology

To obtain information on all of our objectives, especially those related to public diplomacy effectiveness measures and critical public diplomacy challenges, we administered a survey to the heads of public affairs sections at U.S. embassies worldwide. The response rate to our survey was 76 percent. See appendix II for further details on the development and results of our survey.

To examine the range of the State Department's (State) key public diplomacy programs and how programs and resources have changed since September 11, we reviewed State budget requests, annual reports, and other program documentation. We also met with officials in State's Office of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Bureau of Public Affairs, the Office of International Information Programs, and regional bureaus in Washington, D.C.

To assess whether State has an overall strategy for its public diplomacy programs and how it measures the effectiveness of these programs, we reviewed relevant planning, program, and other documentation; analyzed survey results; and met with cognizant State, academic, and private sector officials.

- We reviewed State's efforts to develop its own strategy and its involvement in developing an interagency public diplomacy strategy.

- We reviewed State's current agencywide strategic and performance plans, its agencywide plans for 2004, and the performance plans of selected functional and regional bureaus and overseas missions.

- We analyzed State's performance measurement methods that were identified in the results of our survey of public affairs officers at U.S. embassies.

- We met with officials in State's Office of Strategic and Performance Planning and Bureau for Intelligence and Research and with other State officials involved in strategic and performance planning for public diplomacy efforts in Washington, D.C.

- We discussed private sector methods for evaluating the effectiveness of persuasive techniques with representatives of the Public Diplomacy Institute at George Washington University, School of Media and Public Affairs; Ketchum; and Weber Shandwick Worldwide, in Washington,

D.C.; and the Ad Council, in New York City. We also hosted roundtable discussions in Washington, D.C., with high-level officials from some of the largest public relations and opinion research firms in the United States. The firms represented at these discussions included APCO Worldwide; Fleishman-Hillard, Inc.; Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, Inc.; Hill and Knowlton, Inc.; Ketchum; The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press; Porter Novelli International; Weber Shandwick Worldwide; and Zogby International. We also received information from Gallup International.

To identify the critical challenges faced in executing public diplomacy programs, we reviewed relevant program and other documentation, analyzed survey results, met with State officials domestically and overseas, interviewed foreign government and nongovernmental organization officials, and met with a number of other outside observers of U.S. public diplomacy issues.

- We analyzed impediments to public diplomacy efforts that were identified in the results of our survey of public affairs officers at U.S. embassies.

- We analyzed data on State's foreign language designated public diplomacy positions worldwide and compared them with data on the numbers of officers actually meeting the designated language requirements.

- We analyzed projected staffing needs identified in State's overseas staffing model and compared them with data on the number of positions actually filled.

- We met with officials in State's Office of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Bureau of Public Affairs, the Office of International Information Programs, and regional bureaus in Washington, D.C.

- We met with U.S. embassy officers, host-country government officials, and private sector and nongovernmental organization representatives in the United Kingdom, Morocco, and Egypt to gain a firsthand view of public diplomacy challenges faced overseas. These countries were selected based on congressional interest as well as their respective geopolitical situations, strategic significance to the United States, and roles in the war against terrorism. They were also selected to provide an

appropriate mix with respect to the scale of in-country U.S. public diplomacy operations, the size of U.S. foreign assistance efforts, the types of public diplomacy challenges faced, and the methods used in conducting public diplomacy.

• We consulted with representatives of the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, the Council on Foreign Relations, and a number of retired public diplomacy practitioners.

We conducted our work from May 2002 through May 2003 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Survey Development and Results

To assess the State Department's public diplomacy performance measurement efforts and identify critical challenges faced in executing public diplomacy activities, we conducted a survey of the heads of public affairs sections at U.S. embassies and certain U.S. missions to international organizations and major U.S. consulates around the world. The survey was conducted using a Web-based instrument from March 5 to May 29, 2003.

The questionnaire was developed from October through December 2002 by social science survey specialists and other individuals knowledgeable about public diplomacy issues. We also obtained a series of comments and feedback from key State Department staff in December 2002 and January 2003. The questionnaire was then pretested in December 2002 and January 2003 with five current and former State Department officials who had served as heads of public affairs sections at U.S. embassies overseas to ensure that the questionnaire was clear and unambiguous, independent, and unbiased.

We developed our list of the study population based on information from the Office of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, particularly concerning which missions to international organizations and major consulates should be included in the survey. In all, we sent the survey to the 156 individuals we identified as our study population and received completed surveys from 118 of these, for a 76 percent response rate. Members of the survey population were sent an initial notification of the survey prior to the release of the survey on the Web and an initial survey invitation when the survey was released. These were followed by two reminder E-mails. The survey population was also offered the opportunity to download a copy of the questionnaire to fill in by hand and return via fax. Individuals who had not responded after these measures received calls from the project staff to explain the importance of the study and encourage them to respond. An exception to this protocol was made for respondents serving in the Near East during the Iraq conflict. Follow-up phone calls were not made to those serving in countries in the region of the conflict. Data for this study were entered directly into the Web instrument by the respondents and converted into a database for analysis.

In appendix III, we present the results of the closed-ended questions to our survey.

Questionnaire for State Department Public Affairs Officers

Introduction

Please Note: You may need to use the scroll bar on the right hand side of the screen to read all the information on a page.

The United States General Accounting Office (GAO), an agency of Congress, has been asked by the Chairman and the Ranking Member of the House International Relations Committee to examine U.S. Public Diplomacy programs. This request was prompted by the terrorist attacks of September 11th and the question of what can be done to improve America's image, and understanding of America's policies, around the world. As part of this work, we are surveying Department of State Public Affairs Officers (PAO). This survey focuses on elements that impact the effectiveness of U.S. public diplomacy and possible solutions to challenges that may be identified.

We believe that you can make an important contribution to this study, and ask you to respond to this questionnaire so that we may provide the most complete information to Congress. The questionnaire should take about 30 minutes to complete. GAO is using procedures for this survey to prevent the disclosure of individually identifiable data.

This survey will ask you about your experiences as a PAO from the beginning of fiscal year 2002 through the present. If you have not been serving as a PAO for that entire period, just answer for the part of the time period that you were a PAO. Keep in mind the full range of products and programs you handle as a PAO, including visitors programs, press releases, cultural affairs and others. If there are questions that are not relevant to your experience or that you don't feel qualified to answer, please answer 'Not applicable' or 'No basis to judge'.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the **content** of the survey please contact:

Lyric Clark
Phone: (202) 512-6149, 7:30 am-4:30 pm (EST)
e-mail: clarkl@gao.gov

Michael Courts
Phone: (202) 512-8980, 7:30 am-4:30 pm (EST)
e-mail: courtsm@gao.gov

or if you encounter any **technical** questions or problems logging in contact:

Monica Wolford
Phone: (202) 512-2625, 8:30 am-6:30 pm (EST)
e-mail: wolfordm@gao.gov

Promoting U.S. Interests

1. To what extent, if at all, do you believe that public diplomacy efforts in your current host country are promoting U.S. interests in each of the following ways?

   (Check only one answer for each item listed below.)

	Very great extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Some or little extent	No extent	Not applicable	No basis to judge
1a. Increasing foreign publics' understanding of the American people N=118	10.2%	38.1%	44.9%	6.8%	0	0	0
1b. Increasing our understanding of foreign publics N=118	4.2%	17.0%	46.6%	28.0%	3.4%	0.9%	0
1c. **Informing** foreign audiences of U.S. policies N=118	26.3%	45.8%	26.3%	1.7%	0	0	0
1d. **Influencing** foreign audiences regarding U.S. policies N=118	7.6%	16.1%	57.6%	18.6%	0	0	0
1e. Improving the U.S. image abroad N=118	7.6%	22.9%	52.5%	15.3%	1.7%	0	0

1f. If you have any additional comments on this topic, please use this space to record them. N=62[1]

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[1]N indicates the number of officials that responded to the question.

Country-specific Factors

2. For each of the following country-specific factors or circumstances, please rate how much of an impediment it was, if at all, to achieving U.S. public diplomacy objectives in your current host country since October 1, 2001. If the situation is not present in your host country, please check "Not applicable to country."

(Check only one answer for each item listed below.)

	Not applicable to country	Not an impediment	A minor impediment	A moderate impediment	A major impediment	A very major impediment
2a. A low level of free media and civil liberties for local populations in host country N=117	44.4%	19.7%	12.8%	11.1%	7.7%	4.3%
2b. A high level of religious extremism N=118	47.5%	28.0%	13.6%	9.3%	0.9%	0.9%
2c. A high level of poverty N=118	26.3%	14.4%	21.2%	17.8%	15.3%	5.1%
2d. A high level of illiteracy N=118	36.4%	23.7%	11.9%	9.3%	14.4%	4.2%
2e. Difficulty of access to rural areas N=118	25.4%	16.1%	17.0%	17.0%	14.4%	10.2%
2f. Low level of technological advancement and capabilities N=116	30.2%	10.3%	22.4%	17.2%	10.3%	9.5%
2g. Limited use of or access to the Internet by the local population N=117	22.2%	8.6%	23.1%	20.5%	12.8%	12.8%

2h. The presence of internal and/or external conflict N=118	37.3%	22.0%	13.6%	11.0%	8.5%	7.6%
2i. Opposition to current U.S. policies toward the host country N=116	12.9%	32.8%	24.1%	17.2%	10.3%	2.6%
2j. Opposition to current U.S. policies elsewhere N=118	3.4%	18.6%	16.1%	30.5%	16.1%	15.3%
2k. Not enough access by local host country population to facilities due to embassy security requirements N=117	12.0%	25.6%	27.4%	20.5%	10.3%	4.3%
2l. Other factors N=61	52.5%	6.6%	1.6%	14.8%	11.5%	13.1%

2m. If you checked other factors, please list and describe them here.
   N=33

Factors Supporting Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy seeks to promote the national interests of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign audiences. On the following pages, five sets of factors are listed that may have an impact on conducting U.S. public diplomacy. Focusing on the time between October 1, 2001 and today, please rate in the following questions (3 through 7) the extent and the sufficiency or insufficiency of these factors for helping to achieve public diplomacy objectives in your host country.

Q3: Interagency Coordination

3. **Interagency coordination:** To what extent, if at all, does your Public Affairs Office coordinate with each of the following?

(Check only one answer for each item listed below.)

	Very great extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Some or little extent	No extent	Not applicable
3a. The USAID office in the host country N=117	20.5%	22.2%	12.8%	6.0%	0%	38.5%
3b. U.S. military elements in the host country N=118	17.0%	32.2%	29.7%	8.5%	0%	12.7%
3c. Other entities N=103	20.4%	32.0%	29.1%	3.9%	0%	14.6%

3d. If you checked other entities, please list and describe them here. N=86

Q4: Structural and Organizational Factors

4. **Structural and organizational factors:** How sufficient or insufficient were the following organizational factors for achieving public diplomacy objectives?

(Check only one answer for each item listed below.)

	Very sufficient	Generally sufficient	Neither sufficient nor insufficient	Generally insufficient	Very insufficient	No basis to judge
4a. The degree of integration of public diplomacy functions into the **regional bureaus** N=118	9.3%	51.7%	17.0%	13.6%	3.4%	5.1%
4b. The degree of integration of public diplomacy functions in **your Mission** N=118	57.6%	33.9%	3.4%	2.5%	2.5%	0%
4c. The degree to which public diplomacy efforts employ partnerships with the private sector N=117	6.0%	39.3%	29.1%	7.7%	4.3%	13.7%
4d. Other organizational factors N=42	4.8%	9.5%	14.3%	14.3%	11.9%	45.2%

4e. If you checked an additional organizational factor, please list and describe it here. N=22

4f. Additional comments. N=28

Q5: State Communication and Guidance

5. **State Department communication and guidance factors:** How sufficient or insufficient were the following communication and guidance factors for achieving public diplomacy objectives?

(Check only one answer for each item listed below.)

	Very sufficient	Generally sufficient	Neither sufficient nor insufficient	Generally insufficient	Very insufficient	No basis to judge
5a. The **quality** of strategic or long-term guidance from the Office of the Undersecretary (R) N=118	5.1%	46.6%	18.6%	17.8%	10.2%	1.7%
5b. The **frequency** of press and other day-to-day guidance from the regional bureau and/or Public Affairs N=118	44.9%	46.6%	6.8%	1.7%	0%	0%
5c. The **quality** of press and other day-to-day guidance from the regional bureau and/or Public Affairs N=118	35.6%	50.0%	8.5%	5.9%	0%	0%
5d. Formal feedback on your reporting that you received from the State Department N=118	3.4%	46.6%	22.0%	16.1%	8.5%	3.4%
5e. The **quality** of strategic or long-term guidance from your Ambassador/ DCM N=117	40.2%	41.0%	5.1%	7.7%	6.0%	0%

5f. The **frequency** of press and other day-to-day guidance from your Ambassador/ DCM N=117	44.4%	35.0%	8.6%	5.1%	5.1%	1.7%
5g. The **quality** of press and other day-to-day guidance from your Ambassador/ DCM N=118	40.7%	39.0%	5.1%	7.6%	5.1%	2.5%
5h. Formal feedback on your reporting that you received from your Ambassador/ DCM N=118	37.3%	43.2%	11.0%	4.2%	3.4%	0.9%
5i. The **quality** of guidance from State functional bureaus N=118	5.9%	40.7%	33.1%	14.4%	1.7%	4.2%
5j. The **frequency** of guidance from State functional bureaus N=116	5.2%	39.7%	32.8%	15.5%	1.7%	5.2%
5k. Other guidance factors N=32	9.4%	15.6%	9.4%	6.3%	9.4%	50.0%

5l. If you checked an additional guidance factor, please list and describe it here. N=16

5m Additional comments. N=24
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Q6: Internal Resources and Processes

6. **Internal resources and processes:** How sufficient or insufficient were the following internal resources and processes in the Public Affairs Office?

(Check only one answer for each item listed below.)

	Very sufficient	Generally sufficient	Neither sufficient nor insufficient	Generally insufficient	Very insufficient	No basis to judge
6a. The amount of time available to execute public diplomacy efforts as opposed to other non-public diplomacy related tasks N=118	4.2%	44.1%	10.2%	30.5%	11.0%	0%
6b. The amount of program funds available to execute public diplomacy efforts N=118	7.6%	47.5%	11.9%	19.5%	13.6%	0%
6c. The availability of full Internet capability/ access N=118	29.7%	48.3%	8.5%	10.2%	3.4%	0%
6d. The **speed** of budgeting and administrative processes in your current Mission N=117	9.4%	44.4%	18.0%	14.5%	13.7%	0%
6e. The **flexibility** of budgeting and administrative processes in your Mission N=118	6.8%	39.8%	19.5%	18.6%	14.4%	0.9%
6f. The quality of technology and equipment available N=117	15.4%	50.4%	14.5%	14.5%	5.1%	0%

6g.	The number of **foreign service national staff** available to execute public diplomacy efforts N=118	7.6%	47.5%	9.3%	23.7%	11.9%	0%
6h.	The number of **American FSO staff** N=118	0.9%	36.4%	11.9%	25.4%	25.4%	0%
6i.	Other internal factors N=31	3.2%	6.5%	6.5%	25.8%	16.1%	41.9%

6j. If you checked an additional internal factor, please describe it here. N=25

6k. Additional comments. N=35

Q7: Training Resources

7. **Training resources:** How sufficient or insufficient were the following training resources for achieving public diplomacy objectives?

   (Check only one answer for each item listed below.)

	Very sufficient	Generally sufficient	Neither sufficient nor insufficient	Generally insufficient	Very insufficient	No basis to judge
7a. The overall **amount** of public diplomacy training available to you N=118	5.1%	55.1%	11.0%	18.6%	8.5%	1.7%
7b. The **quality** of public diplomacy training available to you N=118	10.2%	56.8%	15.3%	11.0%	3.4%	3.4%
7c. The **amount of time** available to you for public diplomacy training N=118	0.9%	24.6%	15.3%	33.9%	23.7%	1.7%
7d. The overall **amount** of foreign language training available to you N=117	11.1%	38.5%	8.6%	19.7%	11.1%	11.1%
7e. The **quality** of foreign language training available to you N=116	11.2%	44.0%	12.9%	10.3%	6.0%	15.5%
7f. The **amount of time** you have available for foreign language training N=117	3.4%	27.4%	11.1%	24.8%	18.8%	14.5%
7g. Your **foreign service national staff's** training and experience N=117	16.2%	53.9%	15.4%	9.4%	5.1%	0%

7h. Your **American FSO** staff's public diplomacy related training and experience N=117	7.7%	35.0%	13.7%	19.7%	7.7%	16.2%
7i. Other training factors N=30	6.7%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	13.3%	50.0%

7j. If you checked other training factors, please list and describe them here. N=17

7k. Additional comments. N=36

Most Effective Factors

8. Considering your answers to questions 3 through 7, which three factors do you believe were the most effective elements supporting public diplomacy efforts in your current host country?

To see a list of the topics and numbers click here.

(Please enter the item number and letter (e.g. 3b) and your reasons for each.)

8a. Enter question number of factor supporting public diplomacy effectively.

Most frequently mentioned: 4b

8b. Reason: N=117

8c. Enter question number of factor supporting public diplomacy effectively.

Most frequently mentioned: 4b

8d. Reason: N=115

8e. Enter question number of factor supporting public diplomacy effectively.

Most frequently mentioned: 6b

8f. Reason: N=112

Greatest Impediments

9. Considering your answers to questions 3 through 7, which three factors do you believe were the greatest impediments to public diplomacy efforts in your current host country?

To see a list of the topics and numbers click here.

(Please enter the item number and your reasons for each.)

9a. Enter question number of impediment

Most frequently mentioned: 6a
9b. Reason: N=116

9c. Enter question number of impediment.

Most frequently mentioned: 6b
9d. Reason: N=114

9e. Enter question number of impediment.

Most frequently mentioned: 6h
9f. Reason: N=107

Overcoming Impediments

10. If you indicated that any of the factors in questions 3 through 7 were impediments to public diplomacy efforts, what approaches do you think would be useful for overcoming these impediments?

   (Please use the space below the factor to describe the approach.)

   10a. Interagency coordination (See Q3) N=31

   10b. Structural and organizational factors (See Q4) N=46

   10c. State Department communication and guidance factors (See Q5) N=56

   10d. Internal resources (See Q6) N= 83

   10e. Training (See Q7) N=60

   10f. Impediments not listed above and approaches for overcoming them N=18

Policy Initiatives

11. Since October 1, 2001, to what extent, if at all, were you consulted regarding the substance or implementation of policy initiatives affecting your host country prior to their release by the following offices?

(Check only one answer for each item listed below.)

	Very great extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Some or little extent	No extent	No basis to judge
11a. Your Ambassador/ DCM N=118	34.8%	28.8%	19.5%	9.3%	5.1%	2.5%
11b. Your regional bureau N=118	4.2%	18.6%	39.0%	21.2%	13.6 %	3.4%
11c. The Office of the Undersecretary (R) N=118	1.7%	5.9%	15.3%	36.4%	34.8%	5.9%
11d. Other State Department and Administration leadership N=117	0%	1.7%	21.4%	35.0%	35.9%	6.0%
11e. Other offices N=52	1.9%	13.5%	11.5%	5.8%	19.2%	48.1%

11f. If you checked other offices, please list and describe them here. N=26

Strategic Goals

12. Does your FY 2004 Mission Performance Plan include the strategic goal of "mutual understanding"? N=115

    (Check only one answer.)

    | 1. | 20.9% | Yes |
    | 2. | 77.4% | No (Click here to skip to question 13.) |
    | 3. | 1.7% | Not applicable (Click here to skip to question 13.) |

    12a. Please list the performance goals included under the strategic goal of "mutual understanding" included in your Mission Performance Plan.

    N=27

    12b. Describe the plan for determining whether the targets listed under these performance goals have been met.

    N=23

    12c. In your opinion, which of the indicators listed in your Mission Performance Plan are the best indicators for measuring the effectiveness of public diplomacy efforts? (Please briefly describe them.)

    N= 23

13. Does your FY 2004 Mission Performance Plan include public diplomacy as a strategy and/or tactic for meeting your Mission's other strategic goals? N=112

    (Check only one answer.)

    | 1. | 86.6% | Yes |
    | 2. | 12.5% | No (Click here to skip to question 15.) |
    | 3. | 0.9% | Not applicable (Click here to skip to question 15.) |

14. How will public diplomacy performance be measured when evaluating these strategies and/or tactics? (Please describe briefly.)

    N=87

The next series of questions are about performance measures used by the State Department.

15. In your opinion, to what extent, if at all, do State's performance measures for public diplomacy activities accurately reflect the effectiveness of public diplomacy efforts in your Mission? N=112

(Check only one answer.)

1.	1.8%	Very great extent
2.	13.4%	Great extent
3.	48.2%	Moderate extent
4.	22.3%	Some or little extent
5.	4.5%	No extent
6.	9.8%	No basis to judge

15a. In your opinion, are there better performance measures that could be used? N=112

(Check only one answer.)

1.	37.5%	Yes
2.	38.4%	No (Click here to skip to question 16.)
3.	24.1%	No basis to judge (Click here to skip to question 16.)

15b. Please briefly describe the better performance measures. N=49

16. Does your office administer systematic public diplomacy program evaluations such as questionnaires to participants about programs and exchanges? N= 111

(Check only one answer.)

1.	37.8%	Yes
2.	59.5%	No
3.	2.7%	Not applicable

16a. Does your office have sufficient staff to conduct systematic program evaluations? N=114

(Check only one answer.)

1.	18.4%	Yes
2.	79.0%	No
3.	2.6%	Not applicable

16b. Please briefly describe how performance measures are used in program evaluations. N=78

17. Is the information obtained from the performance measures a factor in resource allocation decisions? N=110

(Check only one answer.)

1.	48.2%	Yes
2.	30.0%	No (Click here to skip to question 18)
3.	21.8%	No basis to judge (Click here to skip to question 18)

17a. Please briefly describe how they are used. N=50

Research

18. The State Department uses polling by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) to assess opinions of foreign audiences and audience research conducted by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) to identify and assess media outreach.

The following questions ask you to describe the frequency, timeliness, and usefulness of this polling and audience research for your public diplomacy efforts since October 1, 2001.

How often does your office receive the following types of information?

(Check only one answer for each factor listed below.)

	Monthly	Every three months	Twice a year	Once a year	Sporadically or rarely	Never	No basis to judge
18a. INR polling data N=116	16.4%	17.2%	6.0%	6.0%	24.1%	21.6%	8.6%
18b. BBG audience research data N=115	0%	0%	0.9%	0.9%	29.6%	53.0%	15.7%
18c. Other sources N=55	20.0%	16.4%	0%	1.8%	9.1%	21.8%	30.9%

18d. If you checked an additional source, please list and describe it here. N=29

19. How timely is the information received from the following sources?

    (Please check one box for each factor.)

	Always timely	Mostly timely	Usually timely	Rarely or never timely	Have not received	No basis to judge
19a. INR polling data N=113	13.3%	19.5%	18.6%	9.7%	23.0%	15.9%
19b. BBG audience research data N=111	0%	0%	5.4%	9.9%	46.0%	38.7%

20. In your opinion, how useful to public diplomacy is the information received from the following sources?

    (Check only one answer for each factor listed below.)

	Always useful	Usually useful	Rarely useful	Never useful	Have not received	No basis to judge
20a. INR polling data N=115	14.8%	42.6%	8.7%	0%	16.5%	17.4%
20b. BBG audience research data N=114	0.9%	6.1%	10.5%	0.9%	36.0%	45.6%
20c. Other sources (please specify) N=61	14.8%	24.6%	3.3%	0%	14.8%	42.6%

20d If you checked an additional source please list and describe it here. N=25

20e. Additional Comments N=21

21. In your opinion, how accurately does INR polling data **measure the effectiveness** of public diplomacy programs and activities in your host country? N=114

   (Check only one answer.)

1.	3.5%	Very accurate
2.	13.2%	Generally accurate
3.	18.4%	Neither accurate nor inaccurate
4.	1.8%	Generally inaccurate
5.	0%	Very inaccurate
6.	47.4%	No basis to judge
7.	15.8%	Not applicable

22. In your opinion, how accurately does BBG audience research **measure the effectiveness** of public diplomacy programs and activities in your host country? N=115

   (Check only one answer.)

1.	0%	Very accurate
2.	1.7%	Generally accurate
3.	7.0%	Neither accurate nor inaccurate
4.	0.9%	Generally inaccurate
5.	0.9%	Very inaccurate
6.	67.8%	No basis to judge
7.	21.7%	Not applicable

23. How could polling or audience research be a more effective tool for your public diplomacy efforts? N=67

Broadcasting

24. Are U.S. government-sponsored international broadcasting programs received in your host country? Such programs include Voice of America Radio/TV, WorldNet Television, Radio/TV Marti, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Afghanistan, and Radio Sawa. N=116

   (Check only one answer.)

   1. 80.2% Yes
   2. 12.9% No (Click here to skip to question 26.)
   3. 6.9% Not applicable (Click here to skip to question 26.)

25. In your opinion, how effective or ineffective are the following broadcasting elements in terms of helping to achieve public diplomacy goals?

   (Please check only one answer for each item listed below.)

	Very effective	Generally effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Generally ineffective	Very ineffective	No basis to judge
25a. Content of broadcasting N=93	7.5%	49.5%	15.1%	16.1%	3.2%	8.6%
25b. Transmission strength quality N=92	8.7%	35.9%	16.3%	18.5%	10.9%	9.8%
25c. Hours during which programs are aired N=92	4.4%	43.5%	21.7%	9.8%	8.7%	12.0%
25d. Use of technology appropriate to market N=92	8.7%	44.6%	15.2%	13.0%	9.8%	8.7%

26. In your opinion, how effective is U.S. government-sponsored international broadcasting in achieving U.S. public diplomacy objectives in your host country (promoting U.S. national interests through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign audiences)? N=109

    (Check only one answer.)

1.	4.6%	Very effective
2.	22.0%	Generally effective
3.	26.6%	Neither effective nor ineffective
4.	22.9%	Generally ineffective
5.	9.2%	Very ineffective
6.	13.8%	No basis to judge
7.	0.9%	Don't know

26a. Additional comments about broadcasting.
    N=66

Demographics

27. How many years in total have you served in the Public Diplomacy cone (include time served in the former USIA)? *(Please enter 1 if one year or less and enter only numbers.)* N=115

    Mean = 16.0

28. How many years have you served as a Foreign Service Officer? *(Please enter 1 if one year or less and enter only numbers.)* N=116

    Mean =16.4

29. How many months have you been the Public Affairs Officer at your current post? *(Please enter only numbers.)* N=116

    Mean = 16.2

Comments

30. If you have any comments about other public diplomacy issues, please provide them here. N=45

31. If we need to ask you a few follow-up questions may we contact you?

    (Check only one answer.) N=114

    1.   93.9%   Yes
    2.   6.1%   No
    3.   0%   No response

When the Survey is Complete

32. When you have completed this survey, please check the "Completed" box below.

Clicking "Completed" is equivalent to "mailing" your survey -- it lets us know that you are finished, and that you want us to use your answers. It also lets us know not to send you any follow-up messages reminding you to complete your survey. N=118

(Check only one answer.)

1. 100% Completed
2. 0% Not completed

Thank You

Thank you for your participation.

Click on the **Submit** button below to exit the survey, then close the browser windows associated with this survey by clicking on the small "X" in the upper right hand corner of your screen.

Questionnaire Programming Language - Version 5.0
U.S. General Accounting Office

Comments from the State Department

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

AUG 20 2003

Dear Ms. Westin:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant Challenges," GAO-03-951, GAO Job Code 320131.

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 Jan Brambilla, Under Secretary's Office for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, at (202) 647-9109.

Sincerely,

Sid L. Kaplan, Acting
Assistant Secretary for
Resource Management and
Chief Financial Officer

Enclosure:

As stated.

cc: GAO/IAT - John Brummet
     State/OIG - Luther Atkins
     State/R - Charlotte Beers
     State/H - Paul Kelly

Ms. Susan S. Westin,
    Managing Director,
        International Affairs and Trade,
            U.S. General Accounting Office.

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              Department of State Comments on the Draft Report
                           U.S. Public Diplomacy:
           State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant
                                  Challenges
                                 (GAO-03-951)

        The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 changed the
   lives, minds and hearts of people throughout the world.  A war
   on terrorism began and continues today.  We cannot effectively
   deal alone with threats and challenges, which are common to all
   of humanity.  Through effective public diplomacy and exchanges
   we are building alliances of common interests based on a
   foundation of trust and respect.  The past year, the Office of
   the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs has
   worked with department bureaus to support the War on Terrorism,
   focusing on our commitment to both Afghanistan and Iraq, and on
   the Muslim world through programs and funding.  Our strategy
   emphasizes policy advocacy supported by information about
   American culture and values, as well as the multifaceted
   educational and people-to-people programs of exchanges funded
   through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.  We are
   also placing increased emphasis on research and analysis,
   specifically of international media coverage of key issues.
   Primary issues for American public diplomacy are the War on
   Terrorism, including Afghanistan and Iraq, HIV/AIDS, and
   strengthening relationships among the community of nations with
   which we share common interests in advancing security,
   prosperity and democracy.

      The report makes five recommendations and we offer the
   following comments for each recommendation.

    •  The Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and
       Public Affairs will expand engagement with private sector
       public relations firms to draw on their expertise in
       strategies and tactics for influencing international public
       opinion.  U.S. public diplomacy strategy will necessarily
       flow from the foreign policy priorities set by the
       President, and primary objectives will be formulated at a
       strategic level: supporting the war on terrorism; advancing
       democracy and prosperity.  Specific objectives and the
       techniques to achieve them will be determined on a regional
       or country-by-country basis.  We welcome the recommendation
       to consider private sector techniques as we pursue
       "integrating all of State's public diplomacy efforts..."
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2

Full integration of public diplomacy functions into all
aspects of the Department's work, policy formulation as
well as implementation, is a primary operational goal of
the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs
and entire senior leadership of the Department.

- We agree with this recommendation and will continue to
collaborate with the private sector to measure the
effectiveness of public diplomacy activities and programs
"to inform and influence target audiences." We agree with
the report's statement that "it is difficult to establish a
direct link between public diplomacy and results," (p. 14)
given the multiplicity of forces which affect public
perceptions and the complexity of issues involved.
Nevertheless, we are committed to determining, as far as
possible, the effectiveness of various public diplomacy
programs on a global basis and the impact of resources
dedicated to them. Recently, we collaborated with the
private sector to measure the effectiveness of our Shared
Values program geared toward Muslim audiences. We expect
that methods will be developed to evaluate the
effectiveness of all public diplomacy programs. Public
diplomacy will only be one factor which, along with the
substance of policy, concrete actions, and other outside
influences, including competing communications efforts,
affects public perceptions and attitudes towards, the
United States and given issues. We note the reports
recognition that public opinion research to measure program
effectiveness in the way used by private firms is very
costly. We will explore with private sector partners the
logic model concepts, which could be applicable to State's
situation.

- The regional executive directors are following-up with the
respective posts to determine the most efficient allocation
of resources to accomplish public diplomacy support.

- The report identified impediments for increased language
training, including staffing shortfalls. The Diplomatic
Readiness Initiative is working effectively to alleviate
these shortfalls. GAO stressed the importance of language
fluency for PD officers and we agree with the assessment.

3

- The report correctly notes that a significant "float" of foreign service officer staffing will go far to alleviate current constraints that used to be acute, especially when officers were needed at post yesterday. Training was a luxury that could only be accommodated when there was no pressure to assign officer.

The report does not adequately describe the Office of Program Evaluation's role in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). This office contracts with independent, external, professional evaluators to conduct outcome and impact evaluations of its exchange programs. Specific programs are evaluated every five to seven years on a rotating basis to determine the extent to which they are achieving their legislative mandates and program goals. Through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, the evaluators measure changes in knowledge, understanding, attitudes and behavior of over 2,700 different ECA program alumni annually using internationally recognized social science research and statistically valid methodologies, including logic models--a requirement in all evaluation projects. With an annual budget of $1.5 million, this unique office in the Department has completed 20 evaluations using 13 separate evaluation firms since 1999.

We are committed to maintaining the highest standards in the development and execution of our public diplomacy programs.

GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the individual named above, key contributors to this report included Rick Barrett, Lyric Clark, Janey Cohen, Michael Courts, Rebecca Gambler, Edward Kennedy, Heather Von Behren, and Monica Wolford.

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