



***Statement of Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Hearing on Public Diplomacy
February 26, 2004***

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this hearing today on State Department public diplomacy programs. I know we are not focusing on international broadcasting today, but I think that is one area where we had some significant success stories recently, and I hope we will turn our attention to it in the near future.

The challenge for the Administration, and for all of us as American government officials, is monumental. To state it plainly, America and American policy is increasingly unpopular. The polling data has been consistent over the past two years – consistently bad.

The most recent report by the Pew organization, issued in June 2003, indicates that in “most countries, opinions of the U.S. are markedly lower than they were a year ago. The war [in Iraq] has widened the rift between Americans and Western Europeans, further inflamed the Muslim world, softened support for the war on terrorism, and significantly weakened global public support for the pillars of the post-World War Two era – the UN and the North Atlantic Alliance.”

The report continues: “the bottom has fallen out of support for America in most of the Muslim world. Negative views of the U.S. among Muslims, which had been largely limited to countries in the Middle East, have spread to Muslim populations in Indonesia and Nigeria, support for the U.S.-led war on terrorism also has fallen in most Muslim publics.”

This is not a pretty picture. I want to emphasize that I am not blaming the Bush administration. The image of America overseas is perhaps the natural price of our status as a global superpower. It also stems from disagreements in foreign nations with U.S. policy. But it also the result of a failure adequately to explain U.S. policy. And we can certainly do something about that.

As the President likes to say, we are a nation at war. But this war against terrorist organizations is not merely waged on the military battlefield; it is a battle of

ideas – a global struggle between the values of liberal democracy and ideologies of intolerance and destruction.

It matters how we organize ourselves for this struggle – and whether we are willing to invest in it. We must make, as the National Security Adviser said about helping transform the Middle East, a “generational commitment” to a serious and sustained effort to engage foreign publics.

Unfortunately, and in ways that are perhaps understandable, the Administration’s commitment to this issue has been relatively modest. For example, the President’s budget for Fiscal Year 2005 contains a slight increase for the international exchanges budget of about \$25 million.

Most of these increases are devoted, quite understandably, to exchanges in the Middle East and other regions important in the war on terrorism. But this increase contrasts with reductions in exchanges funding that used to be provided under the SEED and Freedom Support Act accounts. It may be that over a decade has passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and we have many new friends in Central Europe. But as the Iraq debate demonstrated, we constantly need to cultivate friendships. And it is obvious that, in Central Asia and even in Russia, democracy is hardly flourishing, and we have to stay involved there.

After September 11, 2001, the President invited ideas from me and others about improving public diplomacy. He was very generous with his time. I gave him a proposal, developed with the assistance of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, to provide a significant expansion of U.S. international broadcasting to Muslim countries. It would have cost about half a billion dollars in the first year, and about \$225 million in additional annual costs thereafter. The idea was dismissed by the Administration as too costly.

To borrow a statement made by the first President Bush in his inaugural address, when it comes to public diplomacy, we appear to have more will than wallet.

Money alone will not solve our public diplomacy problems. But I respectfully suggest that we need to invest a lot more in public diplomacy. We have proven programs in educational and citizen exchanges, cultural diplomacy, and international broadcasting – all of which are underfunded. We only hurt ourselves, and the national interest, by such parsimony.

I welcome Ambassador Tutwiler. I commend her for taking on this very difficult job. I look forward to hearing her views.

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