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Before the Committee on Foreign Relations

United States Senate

On

American Public Diplomacy in the Islamic World

February 27, 2003

Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech to the United Nations two weeks ago laying out the case against Iraq was beyond any doubt among the most important statements in the war on terrorism, one that everyone in the world needed to hear.

Had Secretary Powell delivered that speech only two years ago, however, most people in the Arab Middle East would have heard it only through the distorting filter of radio and television stations controlled by those hostile to the United States. Only a tiny fraction – perhaps no more than one or two percent of the entire population – would have had the patience to tune in to the Voice of America's Arabic Service that was broadcast exclusively on scratchy short wave.

But last week, the situation was very different. Thanks to the creation of Radio Sawa, a new program of U.S. international broadcasting, millions of people in the Arab world heard his speech as it was delivered – without the kind of distortions the media in the region all too often insert. Informal survey data show that Radio Sawa – the name means “together” in Arabic – is already the most popular station in many Arab capitals and has gained a significant audience even in Saddam Hussein's Baghdad!

Indeed, Radio Sawa has been so successful that one American commentator, Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times, has called the station “the triumph of the Bush Administration's focus on public diplomacy abroad.”

### *Victories on the Media Front*

Success for America's international broadcasting combines two essential ingredients: trust earned by accurate reporting – which is critical to a democratic people's ability to make informed decisions. And a free open channel to the other ideas that are at the center of this nation's being. We are a nation built on ideas. Our international broadcasting must always reflect, examine, question and illuminate these ideas. Truth about the events we report is as critical to our mission as explaining to our audience why we value the truth.

Allow me to tell you something more about the Sawa success story – and also about some of the other successes in U.S. international broadcasting

– not only because they are so impressive on their own and important in our war against terrorism but also because they point the way to the future.

Months before even the horrors of September 11, my predecessors on the Broadcasting Board of Governors – in no small part energized by my colleague Norman Pattiz – recognized the need for a far greater U.S. broadcast presence in the Middle East. And they set about negotiating agreements that would give us powerful AM transmitters broadcasting throughout the region.

With your support, the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors launched Radio Sawa eleven months ago. A 24/7 service with 48 newscasts a day interspersed among a mix of Western and Arabic popular music, the station’s signals go out on a combination of AM and FM transmitters across the Middle East as well as via digital audio satellite, short wave, and the Internet. Because Radio Sawa represented such a radical departure from longstanding international broadcasting approaches, many were skeptical. But our surveys and reports from independent observers across the region highlight the new reality: in the Arab Middle East, Sawa has won the U.S. an audience including not only the young – who make up the vast majority of the population there – but also older people who turn to it for news and information.

When we launched Radio Sawa on March 23, 2002, we blanketed the Middle East, using a carefully conceived combination of medium wave and FM transmitters, digital audio satellite, short wave and the Internet. We installed a high-powered AM transmitter in Cyprus, and we’re poised to begin service from another long-range AM transmitter in Djibouti. Our listeners in Iraq are getting their signals from an AM transmitter in Kuwait. Many of our allies in the Middle East – Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Djibouti have given us our own FM stations. In addition, Radio Sawa currently has four customized 24/7 programming streams for Iraq, Jordan, the Gulf, and Egypt/Levant.

Radio Sawa news is twice an hour (a full newscast is up to 10 minutes) provides Arabic listeners the kind of comprehensive, balanced and up-to-the-minute news this audience needs to make informed decisions. In addition, Radio Sawa broadcasts many other substantive programs including: “Ask the World Now,” where statements of top U.S. policymakers are used to answer questions from listeners; “The View from

Washington,” where a daily summary of major U.S. policy statements on Iraq; and “The Free Zone,” which addresses broader topics such as democracy building, and human rights with special emphasis on women’s rights. All of these programs are intended to fulfill Sawa’s motto: “You listen to us; we listen to you.”

At the same time, the Voice of America has set up a special VOA Arabic web site to help spread America’s message in Arabic to journalists, opinion leaders, and officials throughout the region. Many members of this elite audience have already signed up to the site’s daily news delivery by e-mail, and many journalists are drawing on these materials to prepare their own articles. Some of them are even publishing VOA materials on American policy in their own newspapers or re-broadcasting them to audiences who might not have any other access to American opinion.

U.S. international broadcasting has not neglected other key parts of the Middle East and the Muslim world more generally. VOA with its recently revamped Cantonese Service and recently expanded Indonesian Service, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and particularly its Central Asian and Caucasus services, and Radio Free Asia also carried Secretary Powell’s speech as well as additional extensive coverage of the rationale for the war on terrorism. Nineteen of RFE/RL’s current 34 broadcast languages are for countries or regions whose populations are primarily Muslim.

Most recently, we at the BBG have combined the signals of VOA and RFE/RL’s Radio Free Afghanistan to produce a 24/7 news and information radio stream for Afghanistan. We have begun to broadcast on FM in country and are working to launch an AM capability by May of this year. Afghans have a long tradition of listening to our broadcasts and our new combined effort is attracting even more. To ensure that we reach an even greater percentage of the audience there, we have installed FM transmitters in the Afghan capital Kabul so that people there can hear our programs more easily. We’ve provided an FM transmitter to the Afghan government itself. We plan to install FM transmission in several other major cities as soon as the security situation permits. And we plan to turn on our new medium wave AM transmitter in May 2003, a station that will allow everyone in Afghanistan to listen to our broadcasts on this more accessible channel.

We have also launched a major effort to reach the young people of Iran. In December, the Broadcasting Board of Governors established Radio

Farda – “Radio Tomorrow” in Persian – to provide a 24/7 stream of programming for the people of Iran. President George W. Bush said during its first broadcast that “the Iranian people tell us that more broadcasting is needed because the un-elected few who control the Iranian government continue to place severe restrictions on access to uncensored information.”

A joint effort of VOA and RFE/RL, Radio Farda – which broadcasts more than five hours of original news and substantive content in addition to music every day – has been an overnight success. For obvious reasons, we can’t do survey research in Iran. But in the first few weeks alone, thousands of Iranians have sent us emails to thank the U.S. for reaching out to the Iranian people over the heads of the Iranian government. A typical email received only last week including an expression of thanks to all the Americans behind this effort and expressing the hope that there will soon be “justice and liberty” in Iran and that soon the Iranian and American flags will be flying next to each other.

This is progress in the war against terrorism. Ideas are the major battleground in this war. We are getting America’s ideas of individual freedom, equality, toleration, and limited government across. And we are succeeding where it matters: by reaching directly into the hearts and minds of a tremendous audience whose other sources of information repeatedly, deliberately, and grotesquely misrepresent who we are, and what we stand for.

### *The Changing Media Environment*

But as important as these breakthroughs on radio and the Internet are, today they are not enough. The battleground has shifted, and that is why I appear before you today.

Television and especially direct-to-home satellite television is transforming the media environment across the region. All of you know about the impact of the 24-hour news satellite channel Al-Jazeera. Its reports have become a staple of our own nightly news. And its impact, along with that of other international satellite channels on the region, is now far greater than any other media. That new reality prompted Thomas Friedman of the New York Times to observe that satellite television is “not only the biggest media phenomenon to hit the Arab world since the advent of television; it also is the biggest political phenomenon” across that region.

The Administration is proposing that we create just such a channel to counter the lack of depth and balance that help to create distortions and misrepresentations when these stations report on the United States, its policies and its people. As chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, I am proud to have this opportunity to make the case for the creation of a U.S. Arabic language satellite television channel. Our case rests on three fundamental facts of political life in the Middle East:

First, as I've already noted, television has already become the most important medium in the region for news and information. The transition from the world of the nomad to modernity, from a newspaper-centric to radio-centric to a television-centric media environment has taken place at breathtaking speed across the area. Surveys consistently show that more than four out of five people in the Middle East get all or almost all of their news from television and that they trust television more than any of the other media channels.

Second, satellite television offers the chance to break the grip that governments in the region now exercise over most radio and television news outlets. As such, it promotes the kind of pluralism of opinions and opening to the broader world that is, again in Friedman's words, "acting like nutcrackers to open societies and empower Arab democrats with new tools." The United States has an interest in promoting democratic change in these countries, and promoting competition and openness in the electronic media is an essential element in our campaign to do just that.

Third, the kind of reporting that U.S. international broadcasting has always done – providing accurate, balanced and reliable information – over time will win us more long-term and reliable friends than anything else we might try to do. As a former director of the Voice of America and editor-in-chief of the *Readers' Digest*, I can tell you that there is a real hunger for such information and that by providing it we will find that we have more friends in the world than many now suspect.

But in my view, the most important public diplomacy initiative of our time can be found in President Bush's '04 budget request that would help make a U.S. Arabic-language television network a reality to the Middle East. In the days following the Administration's announcement, Congress also identified seed money for this Arabic television effort in the '03 budget.

September 11, 2001, changed the way we must approach international broadcasting. We thus propose ending most VOA and RFE/RL broadcasting to the democracies of Eastern Europe where free speech is practiced and where the process of joining the NATO alliance is under way. The closing of these services, whose employees have so gallantly served the cause of freedom, will bring a moment of sadness to many of us who saw victory in the Cold War as a direct result of these radios. But we should remember at the same time that the goals these services struggled and sacrificed for has been achieved, and they should take great pride in the role they played in this historic mission.

Our task now is to draw upon our previous success in the Cold War, to go forward with the new war of ideas as we offer democracy, tolerance, and self-government as the positive alternative to tyranny, fanaticism, and terror. And if we are given the funds the President has requested for Middle East television, I am confident we can build an Arabic-language satellite television station we'll all be proud of. Moreover, its launch will make a major contribution toward helping the peoples of the region move away from extremism and violence and toward democracy and freedom in what we all hope will soon be a post-Saddam Middle East.

### *Toward a Broader International Broadcasting Strategy*

When the United States launched its international broadcasting effort more than a half century ago during World War II, there was only one channel available: short wave radio. We could broadcast into countries from the outside only in this way, and we did so across the world. In the 1940s, '50s, '60s, and '70s, people around the world listened to the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty exclusively on short wave. Our message got through, and many of those who made the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were regular listeners. When asked about the importance of international broadcasting for his country, Polish leader Lech Walesa responded "Can you imagine the earth without the sun?"

But with the collapse of the Soviet empire and with the simultaneous advance of technology, the range of choices available to us to deliver our message has increased dramatically. In addition to short wave, we now can broadcast on medium wave both AM and FM through affiliate stations, deliver text, sound and pictures via the Internet, and broadcast television

both through affiliates and via satellite. And we need to choose carefully the combination of these various technologies to ensure that we effectively reach every one of our target audiences.

In making that choice, we need to remember that one size does not fit all. In some markets, we will need one kind of programming and in others a very different kind. Moreover, in some places, we will be best able to reach our audience via television, in others via the Internet, and in still others via radio either short or medium wave.

We need to keep in mind that no media market is monolithic. We have to make choices about which parts of that market we most want to reach. In some cases, we may need to use more than one channel to do so. In the Middle East, I am confident that a combination of Radio Sawa, RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq, Arabic language Internet, and a U.S. Arabic language satellite television is the best answer. But I would not advocate the same combination or the same type of programming for other markets.

And we need to keep in mind that the media scenes in many countries are changing so quickly that unless we constantly evaluate what we are doing, we may be left behind. We must carefully monitor the situation in all countries around the world and evaluate what we need to do relative to American policy concerns and financial limitations. And at the same time, we also must move to create a U.S. international broadcasting system that is sufficiently flexible to allow us to shift resources in a timely manner. I along with all the other members of the Broadcasting Board of Governors consider this to be our most important challenge. I have already spoken about some of the steps we have taken in this direction. And all of us look forward to discussing the implications of this with you both now and in the future.

Let me conclude my statement with some reflections on the relationship between traditional public diplomacy and international broadcasting. I am convinced that we will not be successful in our overall mission of delivering our message to the world if we fail to grasp that these are two different spheres and that they operate according to two different sets of rules. Indeed, we must always remember that each is most successful when it does so and least effective when it attempts to impose its approach on the other. This Committee well recognized these differences when it considered the International Broadcasting Act of 1994.



Traditional public diplomacy involves government spokespersons here in Washington and around the world taking America's message to the world passionately and relentlessly to foreign officials and foreign audiences. International broadcasting, in contrast, is most effective when it operates first and foremost according to the highest standards of independent journalism. It is based on establishing a direct line of trust between those delivering news and information and those consuming it, and consequently, reliable, accurate news and explicit identification of policy programs is a requirement for success.

This is something officials in Washington and Americans in general are not always comfortable with. I well remember 30 years ago when RFE/RL and VOA broadcast the Watergate hearings as part of their responsibility to report the news accurately and fully. Some here in town and even more outside in the country at large thought this was a mistake. Why were we paying taxes to finance broadcasts about our problems? But I can tell you that I have met so many citizens of the post-communist countries who have told me that it was precisely these broadcasts so long ago that helped them understand why democracy and freedom are so important. After all, they've told me, under communism, who could imagine that their rubber-stamp parliaments would ever investigate a sitting president, let alone take steps to bring him down?

We in America are fortunate: telling the truth works to our advantage, and it works to the advantage of those we tell it to. More than a decade ago, we celebrated the demise of communism in Europe and the special role that U.S. international broadcasting played in first breaching and then bringing down the iron curtain. Now, we confront another barrier, what Thomas Friedman has called "an iron curtain of misunderstanding separating America and the Arab-Muslim world."

Many view this barrier as being even more insurmountable than the old one that divided Europe. But with your help and support for a U.S. Arabic-language satellite television system, I am confident that we will have equal success and successfully overcome what now divides us from the Middle East.