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Remarks by
Under Secretary of State Charlotte Beers
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MR. REEKER: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the State Department, I am Philip Reeker, the Deputy Spokesman, and I am very pleased to welcome you here to National Press Club in Washington for today's discussion about public diplomacy, which is certainly a topic of great interest to all of us here and very much on our minds at the State Department.

Under Secretary Charlotte Beers, who is the second Under Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy, was sworn in October 2nd, 2001, just five days after the United States launched military action against al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan following the September 11th attacks on our country and on our people.

Since that time, Under Secretary Beers has been responsible for managing the Department's information campaign in the war against terrorism, with a special emphasis on developing strategies and programs for communicating with Arab and Muslim audiences around the world.

Just in the last several weeks, for example, the State Department, at Under Secretary's Beers' direction, has launched a broad public diplomacy campaign to communicate American society and values more effectively in the Muslim world. We have materials available for you to look at at the back of the room after today's presentation.

I have been able to work for a little over a year with Under Secretary Beers, but I have known her a lot longer than she has known me. About a decade ago, I was in business school, and anybody getting an MBA is very familiar with Charlotte Beers. She is a legend to all of us and I think it's the wisdom of another person with an MBA, our President, George Bush, to bring into our government, into our State Department, somebody who excels at communicating. Because, afterall, diplomacy is all about communicating, communicating domestically with the American people to tell them what we're doing on their behalf and communicating with the world to tell them what America is all about.

So today, we are very pleased to have Under Secretary Beers here to talk a little bit about how public diplomacy has evolved and adapted to meet the challenges in the post-9/11 world. Following the presentation we'll have time for your questions and answers and there will be a mike that will go around, but please now join me in welcoming to the podium Under Secretary of State Charlotte Beers.

(Applause.)

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Thank you for that introduction, Philip. I had no idea you regarded me as a legend. It doesn't show. (Laughter.)

I think I should also, for transparency's sake, confess I do not have an MBA, even though it's recommended highly in our administration.

We are really fortunate today to have a guest here whose name means everything to us in the Educational and Cultural Bureau and Public Diplomacy. I'd just like to introduce her and ask her to stand. Mrs. Fulbright. (Applause.) Thank you. That means we're really going to have to pay attention to what we say about our exchanges.

Well, you now have had a lifetime supply of our mission statement. We worked hard on this statement because when we all came together we realized that the original charter, which was to inform and to influence -- certainly appropriate bookends for what we're trying to do -- missed something quite important, and we've elected to call it engagement. It's a time -- it's a dangerous time not to be engaged and we've been thinking very hard and with new resources and new capacity to find ways to engage.

I want to start off this report card for you by showing you a powerful example of a policy communication which is also a public diplomacy message in the most complete way. Let's start that second piece, please.

(A portion of the Secretary's MTV appearance on February 14, 2001 was shown.)

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: And that's it. That's everything that needs to be said. The impressive thing about this moment is that Secretary Powell took questions for two hours, live, on MTV, which arranged 375 million young people as a viewing audience. And that has led us to put down for our future expectations a guideline.

Could I see the next chart, please?

The messenger has to be right. Fortunately, for us in this government, we have a number of eloquent and believable spokespeople and they always are our first communication messengers. But we also have to deal with something now that I don't think has been the province of public diplomacy in some years as we've dealt with systematic declines and reduction of people to get

the job done. And that is what we would call in the advertising world "magnification." If it's spoken to 200 people, how do you reach 2 million? And we are going to elaborate on this a bit because the reach of our messages has now become an absolutely burning issue.

When it comes to addressing policy, there are many point of contact, fortunately, for the US Government, throughout the world in our embassies. But we in IIP, as these initials are so fondly used at the State Department, Information Products, are responsible for the fastest delivery system to our embassies and to the journalists and the governments around the world.

I think it's impressive that we are able to get out any messages from any of the government officials, not just State Department, on the same day they're delivered in 30 languages, so it's fast and it's believable, it's always true and it's accurate. So in a way, that's stage one for us in terms of policy communication.

And then the ambassador and all of his embassy team take the lead in taking out the policies and the messages that are representative of our voice with the rest of the world. Many of our country-specific messages will come from the country based on their needs and their unique situation. In Mexico, they are very concerned with legislative reform and had a very positive effect in that country as it seeks to reform certain parts of their legislation. In Morocco, the whole country team was asked by the ambassador to go out and visit schools in that country -- and do what? Simply talk about themselves as Americans. There are some members of the country team who don't consider themselves articulate persons, and they were very reluctant to go. They did go, and found it to be a most rewarding experience. And furthermore, every time we can activate someone to go and speak about life in America, what it's like for them, and create an exchange, we are tapping into an important moment of contact throughout the world.

While there is no substitute for hearing from our officials, the truth is the President, Dr. Rice, Vice President Cheney, Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary Powell, Ambassador Ross, these were really -- and plus the other experts in our governments -- were in interviews at the rate of one a week immediately after September 11. It was an absolutely crucial availability, and I must tell you that every one of those officials made themselves available because we all understood we had to get out there, we had to exchange, we had to get in interviews.

And we pressed for exposure in media channels that were, then, not very familiar to us, such as Middle East Broadcasting, Abu Dhabi TV, Al Jazeera, and in newspapers which are Pan Arab and often many of those that came out of the London Gateway.

We set up many more responsive facilities than we've had in the past for the foreign press at the President's ranch in Texas, at the White House, and in our own State Foreign Press Centers, which are Washington, New York and Los Angeles.

And soon after 9/11, our Public Affairs group started an unprecedented series of exchanges to the United States for TV journalists and newspaper writers from other parts of the world.

Fortunately for us, we had just planned before September 11th to have a group of Indonesian journalists come in. Now, here's another guideline we set ourselves. If people come here, what happens? If we don't talk about what they did, what happened as a result, what are the benefits to us, we can't justify increased budgets and get the word out to our many constituencies.

Here's a picture of the journalists and here is the documentation of results. We tracked down every article that was written as a result of their being here, and this one pullout is a story of one of the journalists interview of an Iraqi who is now living in this country and talking about the precious freedom he has to practice his religion.

In addition to that, we had journalists recently from Pakistan and we arranged to give them equipment so they could do their interviews anywhere they choose and simultaneously broadcast it back to their own country, which is a degree of authenticity we really do need. Here's a clip from that interview.

(A video clip was shown.)

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: That's a budding diplomat if I ever heard one. But I like to think of that being translated instantly into the country that is often very suspicious of us.

So our guidelines add this other condition, which is third-party authenticity. There is no question that we are in a time where we desperately need to have other voices speaking for us, and not literally for us, but in their own voice and in their own way. And that kind of translation has meant that we put more money and effort into these what we call TV co-ops.

Even as President Bush delivered his pivotal speech on September 12th to the United Nations regarding the conduct of Hussein's regime, we noted there was a very timely book launched at the same time by Ken Pollack of the Brookings Institute called *The Threatening Storm*. We contacted Mr. Pollack and asked him if he would interrupt his book tour, which was not that easy to persuade him to do, and he agreed and went on a number of digital video conferences and visits to countries as far spread as France, Austria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, and now he's scheduled for South Africa and he's agree to do a series more. He's that third voice, and he is speaking about the cases, pro and con, of invading Iraq in a more reasoned and reasonable way than most people could, and he has another voice to offer.

So the timeliness of making that effort is the kind of opportunistic thing we're really trying to do.

Once a policy is set in motion, it's really vital that we provide context. As I visited the ambassadors around the world, I can see what happens to them when they get the policy cold but they don't get all of the context, the questions, the issues, and the many things that talented journalists in that country will find to critique and survey.

We've learned it's a lot better to put the context in as we send the policy out. And that means we've got to get a lot of things cleared and move it faster on the line than perhaps we did in the past.

Our new system is called "Issue Briefs." We have one here for you to look at. It's a very complex one because it's on the International Criminal Court and every one of our embassies around the world needed to answer questions about this.

So, in addition to the context, the way it works, how it affects other countries, we've added to that 12 links to other databanks so that there's a quick response and an opportunity not to have to call back to Washington to find out what's current. And that list of subjects will cover everything from the Rome Statute itself, to Marc Grossman, our Policy Advisor's speech on the subject, which was very current.

The context can also demand a kind of storytelling. And that's something we really have to get better at. This is an emotionally laden universe now. It's not just the facts that are operating in the world now. It's also something as emotional as terrorists, and violence, and religion, and spiritual issues. So, often now, we turn not just to the facts or the words or even the speaker on camera, but to books and pictures and something that conveys stories.

This is a new one we came out with. I think Secretary Powell announced it last week. It's called *Iraq: From Fear to Freedom*. And while you, if you look through this book, would say, "I know all of this," many people in the world simply do not know these things. In addition to making a very clear journal of facts about this regime, it also deals in depth with the people of the country and the many dreadful experiences they've had. It tracks through.

And then the last section is pointing to the hope for the Iraqi people. And this young woman is part of the group of women who have just attended a service. What's really a very impressive point here is the President's own words about his wishes for the Iraqi people, and these are the words we really need to get out to the world in the midst of many other interpretations or misperceptions or characterizations of what we say and what we really mean.

"I hope the good people of Iraq will remember our history. America has never sought to dominate, never sought to conquer. We have, in fact, sought to liberate and free. Our desire is to help Iraqi citizens find the blessings of liberty within their own culture and their own traditions."

And he also says, "America, along with other nations, will share responsibility to help Iraq reform and prosper."

(Young protestors chant: "You're selling war and we're not buying.")

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: I think I've just lost the camera to a singing choir.

A PARTICIPANT: Please say what you want to say.

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Thank you very much.

(Protestor chants: "Two-thirds of Americans are against the war in Iraq. We're not buying this and Charlotte Beers is selling the war in Iraq to Muslims and Americans.")

A PARTICIPANT: Call your own press conference. Let people come listen to it.

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Just a reminder that the President has said the absolutely last option is war.

Now, will somebody tell me what that smell of formaldehyde is in the room? I've no idea what they brought in with them. I must say, they're polite. (Laughter.)

Against the many voices that we hear in the world, some of which we heard here -- and we always preserve the right for such interruptions to take place in our country -- I should point out to those young women that in Iraq they wouldn't have stood a chance of walking out freely.

(Applause.)

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: The important thing about our products is that they have to be marketed. We can't assume that anyone is going to be assertive enough to pick up our website, reproduce, pull it down and move on. And so we're learning to use the modern marketing tools of banner headlines, linking into other sites, making sure that we have speakers who use this material or who can use it. So it's much more than just a databank.

But we're also looking to the faces of the future of Iraq. It's very important that we try to imagine the world of Iraq. And we were present at the Iraqi open opposition conference. The people we sent there are part of a new team we've put in London to do much more in-depth relationship with the Arab press, and London is often the gateway there, but they'll move wherever they have to.

And they're experts in the world of the Middle East and Arabic speaking. And they went to the conference and interviewed a number of people, and we put these on camera and later we'll develop materials for our own use or for possible use in the general broadcasting. I'll show you one clip.

(A video clip was shown.)

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: There's simply no substitute for hearing someone with such kind of credibility talk about what he hopes for and what he has seen in his own country.

There's another way of talking about what we're about, and clearly the values and belief systems of the American people that inspire and inform our policies are a very essential part of public diplomacy. And here's where we have really had to rebuild and our programs because they've been decimated, and the ability to do music and cultural affairs is something we really have to work at to rescue.

This is a new product, also by International Information, called *Writers In America*. Fifteen writers -- elegant company they keep -- all of them significant writers and poets. And what we are, what's happening with this group is they have also agreed to tour in behalf of the United States and the American way of life. And what's inspiring about this is there's a universality under this booklet in spite of how different each of them had as a life experience -- not always rosy, either -- is the idea of possibilities. And if there's one thing we would like to share with the rest of the world, it is the sense that there are great possibilities ahead for all of us.

As Richard Ford was quoted in *The New York Times*, he talks about the fact that he's eager to go to Islamic nations to help humanize America. And we have this sense of goodwill among our citizens, we just need to put the programs together to tap into it.

We have another very powerful force for engagement that's been longstanding and perhaps is one of the most famous of our public diplomacy efforts, and that goes by the really light-hearted name of Educational and Cultural Bureau. This is a very big division. The budget has some \$245 million. And even so, it's, to me, an amazing miracle of efficiency and consistency that every single year we bring in 35,000 exchanges, the premier of which, really, is the Fulbright.

We could never do this without the help of 90,000 volunteers. So when you talk about private-public partnerships, it's hard to imagine anything more productive than the exchanges that have been in place for so long. So our job is to see how we can take these exchanges into yet another step of expansion and magnification.

Too many people think of exchanges as long-term, because we quote that 50 percent of the international coalition are once exchange visitors or international visitors. This is true. And it makes a big difference when you're talking to someone who's had some experience with the United States and foreign policy. But it also means, thanks to Pat Harrison's leadership, that we can make the exchanges very immediate.

In the last three months, we have brought in four different groups of women to take part in the United States and to have their own experience as needed and tailored to their interests. The first group were 14 Afghan women who are civil servants and they come in from various government ministries. And before we move on, let's just take a moment to recognize that none of those women would be in government service if it weren't for the fact that the US Government said, "there have to be women in the ensuing government of the Afghan country."

And they are so impressive that everyone gets bowled over by them when they come -- the bravery and the belief in what they can accomplish.

Let me show you one of these women on camera and the response one of our students in this country had to her.

(A video clip was shown.)

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Every single study shows that if we can educate a woman, we do a lot to propel the prosperity and wellbeing of a country forward. And that's why we have concentrated so much on immediate exchanges and help to these women. We also had a group of Afghan teachers here. And when they come to us, they say, "Please don't leave us. Come back and extend the dialogue." And so Pat promised them with her new budget, apparently, to send American educators right back over to Afghanistan, and the teachers are being lined up now to go and sustain the training.

We had 49 Arab women from 15 different countries over to witness our elections and talk about law and the process. They were simply astounded that we could be so hostile the day before the election and all agree that it was over the next day, which may still surprise some of us, as well.

And then a wonderful view took place that was almost like the benefit of being a woman in this struggle and the bravery that's involved, because we then followed this up with a Baltic, a group of women from the Baltics, who are entrepreneurs. I mean, they're already there. They're building their companies, and the wonderful idea that was put together by Ambassador McElveen-Hunter, who is unstoppable as far as I can see, is that they would be co-sponsored by CEO women in this country. And the good news is, we had plenty to choose from. And they are staying together as a partnership. And it's a prototype for us of other kinds of programs we can do in exchanges.

So, what about the elephant in the living room, as somebody asked me in one of our questions? Or maybe he said in the dining room? On the table? The hostility and distrust felt for the United States, what are we going to do about that?

Well, we have all been made aware of the polls which report our eroding good will with the rest of the world. But it's considerably more intense and more deliberately manipulated by extremist factions in the Middle East. It serves their purpose, you understand, to paint us as decadent and faithless -- a place and a people who are inimical to the tenets of Islam. These distortions happen every day in their press, in their magazines and from their pulpits.

It's "the policy's stupid," they all say. Well, it is and it isn't. We are subject in this region to the most negative view of our policies, that's for sure. And the Israeli-Arab conflict is a personal one to many of these people. It's made more intimate and immediate by constant coverage of

mained bodies, extreme stories, and also real stories of violence and death of children. It really helps the extremists when we say nothing. But we work every day in many, many places in this government to try to advance the causes of these big issues.

Our share of the mainstream voices is at an all-time low, in terms of being heard. Our silence, I believe, is dangerous. But how do we speak out in such turmoil? The Council offer, "Why don't we just wait until Middle East peace is resolved," is tempting, and it's even more dangerous. Any dialogue, any small door open, any misperception corrected is worth doing.

In the region, you know, cynicism toward the United States, which is perceived as the world's bully, is expected there and popular to do. But underneath that, we have been able to establish they're still listening. There's a hope that we, this so-called "superpower," can help. To me, the most striking thing about the "Pew Study," was how much gloom people felt about their own country. And that, itself, is an opportunity when you think about what needs to be done.

Any door that can open us to the things we are united in, rather than that which disunites us, is something we need to look at. Here is an interesting and unchanging fact about the world. This report, though, is from 3,200 adults in eight Arab countries. "What do you care the most about?" And in spite of what some of my journalist friends say, it actually isn't foreign policy. It is all of these other factors that affect the quality and texture of a human being's life. Why can't we deliberately and carefully engage in a conversation that is concerned with the number one, two, three and four things that happen in my life? And that's where we often start.

Let me show you some more information about the Middle East. There is no question that there's a prevailing point of view that we are not the right place for anyone who is interested in following the Islamic kind of life. And the belief that this is this decadent and faithless country is a very widespread one as you look at the percentages.

The other way of looking at it is to call us "anti-Islam," which includes a lot of other attitudes. This is a hard chart to read. It means that very few of the people believe we're pro-Islam. I don't recommend that as a chart form.

Now here's another way of looking at the information. Both Roper and Gallup have done value attribute ratings. And, in fact, at first look at some of these value attributes you would say, "We don't actually have much in common. Do we?" We certainly don't rate modesty at the same level that they do in Saudi Arabia. And the word "freedom," which needs definition from country to country appears to be a different one. But let me show you the next one.

Faith, family and learning. We are much closer to our Arab friends than we are, for instance, to France. This always makes me laugh that they rated faith as 42. And someone said, "That's no surprise at all," but the thing about it is, here we have a natural bridge to be built between us and these countries, and yet it is not at all perceived that way.

The truth is these core values now defined by these kinds of large, mainstream studies mean that we have something to talk about. The problem is, they don't recognize it. Look at the gap. They rate their values in consistent terms with these other attributes, but they rate our values in a totally different way, and they don't assume that we could put faith or family anywhere near the top. This is a summary, also concluded by -- the next one please -- the Roper and Gallup, which says, "It is just staggering that they will not acknowledge what has been clearly fact and, in fact, the basis for much of our belief in our Constitution and the way we've organized ourselves."

So when you have such a gap between perception, which is taught often and to the advantage of the extremist, it's worth thinking, how could you address at least this one aspect of the communication bridge we need to build? And here's an ultimate discipline, which you know in any conversation you've ever had with anyone. It's not what you say, it's what they hear.

We could pronounce displeasure at this gap or protest about how many churches, temples and mosques we have and it would not be heard. So how can we do it? We tried this idea. Here is the way we see to open doors. You have to have a relevant issue. Anyone in marketing knows they won't listen unless you're talking in their terms. It has to be someone I can relate to. Let's try to make it as believable in the world of great cynicism.

How can we get something very authentic in the way of a third party? And we went to the Council on American Muslims to co-sponsor, to co-partner this with us. The best time would be Ramadan, because it's a time of great television and reading and thoughtfulness, and we have a message about it. And finally, we must talk to the mainstream. We really have to get beyond the rather stratified conversation we have with elites and government people, though that's our first order of communication, and get to the people who've been told every day their definition of who we are.

In order to get to these people, we only have one choice in the world of the Middle East and Southeast. We have to buy the media ourselves. And that's a problem because anything that causes paid media is more likely to be propaganda. But we have a means here of reaching millions of people -- not 200 in a conference who have been willing to come to, say, the embassy.

Here is what we call a collage -- a summary of advertising messages. I used the "a" word. I shouldn't have done that. A summary of messages prepared for the communication into the country about Muslim life in America. When we tested these in Cairo and Jakarta, they came back and said to us, "Please don't make them so short. And don't make it all religion. Tell me how it is for our people in the United States with other people." And this is a view of four of them. We actually produced five.

(A video clip was shown.)

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: I suppose we could listen to these endlessly, but you may not be of the same inclination. In addition to these kinds of events and responses, the measure of the success of this program will be also what happens afterwards. And every one of our posts has been impressive in arranging events that follow on to this and create more dialogue.

I want to take a minute now and spend a second on what are the issues that we face when we try to develop new programs. The new initiatives that we're attempting are to recognize some very tough realities. Our embassies are practically fortresses now and the easy access to go and visit the embassy and have an experience is not possible. I feel daunted by it myself, and there simply is no choice.

We've lost a lot of touch points with people and also facilities. The Libraries, the American Center, the Information Center, the Cultural Centers. Every country I go to bewails and misses these circumstances. The question is, are we going to get anybody to rebuild them and will we be able to provide them with the security needed?

The explosion of loose, unverified, mythical kind of data is in the street, in the Internet, in the satellite television, everybody has a dish, everybody's getting their information from any source, and there's this aura about data that comes from the Internet. If it's on the Internet, it must be true, because it's such a magical new system. And people who have a story to tell, however negative or extremist are emboldened by the possibilities of doing mass communication. So the channels for them are print, Internet and television.

And that also includes a very one-dimensional picture of America.

So what we have to do is persuade our Congress and our constituencies everywhere in the world that we have to answer this and we have to get into the young people's minds and hearts. We have to broaden these audiences past the elite and governments if we expect to have any kind of meaningful communication. And we have to activate every single person who can speak well and in behalf of the United States, so we're working on some initiatives like exchanges. Now here are the exchanges. And the alumni go back and we don't keep in touch with them. We want to change that. We're going to build a databank and contact them and give them programs.

This is a picture of success. These were the American corners that were sustained in the Russian world at the early days called "The Freedom Support Act," and we can prove that if we can build that kind of contact around the world, we can make progress. But that's probably not realistic. Those are big rooms. There are a lot of people attending them. So we're working with the Smithsonian to invent something that we're calling modestly *An American Room*. It'll use virtual reality. You'll walk in and see and experience the United States, and I've been told, I ask for, "Can I walk down the street of an American town?" They said, "Yes, we'll see." And it's an exciting way to use the technology.

This room could be put down in a library, in a shopping mall, it could be put on a bus and rolled around. So it's an aggressive new idea and I really hope we can support and partnerships to work on that. And we're going to publish an Arabic youth magazine. This is just a prototype, but we have selected a team to put it together.

If you look at the magazines that are available in the Arabic world, you would never find the United States in any positive way. For instance, in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, which is a story carried by many magazines, there was not a single reference to the United States even being there. That kind of silence is dangerous. Besides, this is a really good way to talk to the young people about health, about possibilities, about learning.

And last we have, hopefully, a partnership with Sesame Street. We have been dazzled by the work they did in Egypt. Their Sesame Street Alam Simsim character is running there. They use local producers. The children are glued to the set. They are learning English, they are learning about American values.

Why not do that for people from 11 to 19 and teach computer life and not only English, but technology, where even though people think poorly of us anywhere in the world, they will grant us expertise and success in these two areas. And I think that's it for the report card for the year, and I would like to thank you for listening.

(Applause.)

MR. REEKER: Now, we do have some time for a few questions, as promised. So if you could put up your hand and then wait for the mike. We'll start with the gentleman here. Please introduce yourself and tell us who you're with.

QUESTION: My question to you, ma'am, I wonder if you saw the segment on *60 Minutes* that talked about the shared values? And they were saying that this is really a great advertising campaign. If you wanted people to flood America, if they want to come back and show that throughout our country and so on. And so my question to you, ma'am is on the issue of tolerance.

While the President and Secretary of State have been remarkable and valiant and standing up to bigotry, there is growing insensitivity in America to, let's say, the suffering of the Palestinians and so on. I was wondering maybe if you are considering a campaign that is really directed toward the American public, that talks about shared values as well?

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Are you saying would we do a campaign to the American public? Yes. It's a very good question. It is, though, unfortunately for us, a mandate from our Congress that we not address anything that has to do with influential or public diplomacy products to the United States, itself.

We're precluded from doing that. We have every access to the United States in terms of telling them what the State Department does and giving them the information, but the materials that you saw today are all prepared for international world and are not allowed to cross back over to the United States. It's called the Smith-Mundt law, and if you would like to discuss it with someone else, be my guest. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: I just want to first say how grateful I am to you, Secretary Powell, and to Patricia Harrison for your both strong and intelligent support of international education exchange because I do feel that that's extraordinarily important. These exchanges, whether they are here or there, they provide models and that is a wonderful way of overcoming a lot of things.

There is another very powerful force, and that is the culture and the arts. I lived for two years in the Soviet Union in the early sixties and they had, for instance, New York City Ballet come over. I cannot tell you what a conversation that non-verbal form created. It showed creativity and imagination in a way that the Soviets did not have any idea about.

In and amongst the troupe was Arthur Mitchell who did more to show that our total racist and total segregation was not exactly correct, and I was just wondering what your feels were in that area?

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: I couldn't agree more. It is a matter of resources. I do think we're beginning to develop programs that will find a way to be both efficient and persuasive. But it hasn't been on the list of resources in the State Department and we're working very hard to make sure that happens because we are very aware that it's the intangible assets of the United States that carry a message, as you call, non-verbal.

And, I mean, I was thrilled to see the 15 writers being portrayed. And everywhere we go, no one any longer has any books on American literature. And in the Arab world we need desperately to translate those books. So you've defined the size of the job. And the thing that's interesting is the private sector could help us a lot with this ability to martial creative resources and send them over. And the State Department could be a positive conduit. And we're hoping to work with people in that area.

MR. REEKER: The gentleman here.

QUESTION: There's no doubt at all that you have a great story in this country to convey to the rest of the world, and particularly to the Arab world. And you have started doing that over the last one year. But at the same time, something has happened which has undermined very much your work. And I must speak frankly. And that is, despite the fact that the President is very, very, very much attached to the concept of freedom of religion and he has immediately gone to the Islamic Center after 9/11, after that there has been a terrible, terrible campaign against Islam, against his prophet Mohammed in the worst possible manner.

My question is, how far does political consideration interfere in your work? In what sense, the President, despite the fact I said -- we always commend the President on his tolerance and on this -- but despite this fact, he remained silent against this vicious campaign against the prophet Mohammed and against Islam which was also adopted by some of your very famous priests or leaders of religious factions until the last elections were finished and then he came out very strongly. By this time the damage has been done. How do you feel in your office when something like this has been happening and you can't do anything because of law?

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Well, you just described most of my days, but I think that it is very painful for us when someone who is American speaks out in a bigoted or negative way toward any religion. And the President's own actions represent our country and our behavior and he made, also, a visit to a mosque just recently. And all over the world our ambassadors and our people have held Iftaar dinners. We have really tried to be respectful and honor the period of Ramadan, which is why we have made an effort to make sure that these messages about religious tolerance took place in that period of time.

Nevertheless, in our country, it is quite possible for people to speak their mind even though it's not necessarily the kind of voice we would like to hear. And I think the best thing I can offer you is that everyday we have tried to put out around the world a story of religious diversity and tolerance. In virtually every booklet and journal that we produce is addressing this issue. It's interesting because I think at one time we might have taken it for granted that all of the world knows that this is an incredible foundation for the United States.

Now we no longer take it for granted. And it's important for you to remind us that there are other voices out there and we must be very assertive at speaking our own voice. Thank you.

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: I'm sorry, I didn't hear where you're from.

Oh, no wonder.

QUESTION: Okay, now it's on. I want to return to the subject that you mentioned briefly. It's the policy. Because frankly, selling the values is wonderful, but I doubt if any government can claim the values of its people. The values belong to the people rather than to the government, and I'm speaking as a former Soviet. (Laughter.) The question that I have is, in the commercial world, when you advertise something, you have the ultimate option of discarding the product if it's not bought. You do not have that option with policies. How much of a constraint is that?

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Well, first of all, I have been trying to correct this ever since I arrive here. Just because I come from Madison Avenue doesn't mean I think I'm selling. It's a discipline in the United States Government and the place we are in the world that we

should approach our subjects with a certain amount of humility. There is no assumption that we have a ready buyer out there, so please believe me when I say that these many documentaries are presented as an offering to create a dialogue, which is a really different starting point than a pitch.

The second thing is, I am not sure I phrased you properly, but in our country, as you well know, the people own the government, too. And so we can't accept any separation. It's very hard in some of the parts of the world for people to understand that to not like the policy but like the people is a gap because it is our people and their beliefs and values that inform and inspire the policies.

So I don't consider it a constraint. The constraint is the complexity of the job, the stories that have to be told, dimensionalizing something as complex as the United States and dealing with the information revolution.

Thank you.

QUESTION: I'm a little confused, still, on following up on that -- what you do with the elephant in the room, because it's still there -- the unpopular policy. And secondly I'm wondering about efforts from other agencies in the government, if you see a role, particularly, say, from the Pentagon. Is there a role for the Pentagon in working in countries in the area of public diplomacy?

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Well, the short answer is that there are a number of exceptionally talented, experienced and seasoned people working virtually around the clock on the policy. Our job is to make sure that policy is delivered clearly, accurately, swiftly in the proper context. We influence the policy in the sense that we always return the data we get from the field, we do research endlessly, we confer about the communication of the policy, so I would say we're integrated and we care deeply about this communication ability of the policy.

But there have to be other conversations. And for the world of people who are only interested in the policy, I have to say to you that's not nearly enough of a dialogue. And that's why we're fighting so hard for resources and trying to move out into very different kinds of media and programs in order to reach the people who do not hear from the United States ever.

The second part of the question.

QUESTION: The Pentagon.

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Oh, Pentagon. Actually, we collaborate often with Department of Defense in terms of programs that we might have a joint interest in, for instance, in Afghanistan, as the soldiers play a role in building a hospital, we'll be there telling that story and we coordinate that carefully.

When we have to develop a fast response mechanism as we did in the days of September 11th, the military, representing the action there and the ability of the Public Affairs team to report on it is a natural collaboration. And I should say that those are typical of the kinds of programs we do with the Pentagon, or rather, the Department of Defense.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, this question relates to another agency of government, but would you care to comment on the op-ed piece by Senator Helms criticizing a decision to change the direction and format of broadcasts in Tehran?

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Well, I know that Chairman Tomlinson has issued a very articulate answer to that op-ed piece. I have to tell you, my first response was, I'm just glad everybody's talking about these subjects. Too often they weren't anywhere near the headline or the op-ed pieces, so let's just keep getting the word out and get the people interested in how we're communicating.

As I understand it, and I sit on that board as a representative of Secretary Powell, the belief there, and the expectation is that the new product that will come, in fact, I think it's just started today, is something of the best of the old and some of the new because we're going to have AM transmission as well as short wave. And that's a considerable improvement. And we're trying to keep some of those programs that were so important and have done a good job at communicating with the people of Iran, and we're adding to it some of the very attractive attributes of Radio SAWA. So I think the story is bigger and better than it seems in that editorial comment.

QUESTION: A follow-up on the question about the Pentagon. What kind of firewalls exist between your operation and Secretary Rumsfeld's "Strategic Influence" operation? Particularly, what controls are there in place to prevent disinformation and other forms of psychological warfare information from seeping into your public diplomacy output?

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Well, the firewall is really simple. We only tell the truth. And we have every means to evaluate whether what we have in our hands and going out over our various channels is the truth.

As far as I understand, Secretary Rumsfeld made it very clear that he, himself, is only interested in communicating the truth. So I don't think there's any conflict of interest here, but we are very careful in our coordination with the Department of Defense that we are dealing with what we would call only the most overt, transparent programs.

And besides, they are all that really work.

QUESTION: Actually, I have two questions. The first question is concerning how much do you think a possible US war against Iraq will very much influence your program and all your

propaganda campaigns you're making in the Muslim world and Arab world? And the second question is concerning this registration process which the Arabs and Muslims are now going through. On one hand you're showing videos and films, you know, saying things are great and wonderful, but I've been to one of these INS Centers and I've been seeing people handcuffed by plastic things.

I read a story the people ran out of plastic handcuffs because people are being arrested there and fingerprinted and photographed. And, like, that's another aspect and I wonder how much this also affects your propaganda campaign?

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Well, I can't wander into the world of "what if" in terms of projections of Iraq. I think that at the moment we're in a position of evaluating that situation and there's no point in speculating about that. But I'm glad you brought up the visa issue because other people have mentioned to us that -- this is a program about how satisfying and how many opportunities there are in the United States. And it is, in a way, because you can't have an American-Muslim tell their story without them conveying that as they chose to tell it in their own words.

But there's no question that we have a big communication issue in terms of the visa program. We'll make no apologies for changing this program. We do have to get a process that our people feel comfortable with, but we also, oh, all of those people who want entry to the United States, a practice we really need to encourage, to give them a system to understand what they are going through to be better prepared for when they come in. And we're working with a communication group to put that information out, at the very least around embassies, but also for our colleges and universities and our businesses so that we can at least make this policy clear and give people an opportunity to anticipate it and make themselves ready for the process as we send it through.

Almost every morning at the 8:30 meeting Secretary Powell asks, "How is the load, the backlog on the visa people and are we making sure that we're honoring our effort to process, to be fair and to communicate our new policies as they evolve?"

Yes.

QUESTION: My question has partly been asked by my colleague from Ali-Ahram, but the fact is that of the 20 countries now, a list which has been prepared of who's, a certain category of citizens have to be -- register themselves with the INS and get fingerprinted. It's very humiliating. And I think it is also, it may undermine a good deal of the work that you are trying to do, number one. Number two, are you satisfied that you have been able to establish a case, especially in the Islamic world that Iraq poses a physical threat to the United States?

UNDER SECRETARY BEERS: Well, the first one is is on the visa issue, I don't think there's any question that the change in the visa policy is going to be viewed by some as difficult and you -- what was the word you used? Humiliating.

But the President said recently in a meeting when I watched him blow his whole schedule and talk for 25 minutes to the Afghan women that his number one job he considered to be the protection of the American people. And I think the visa policy is driven by that concern and confidence that we need to put together a program that will work.

I think the American people demand this of us.

And your second question was how well have we communicated the issue on Iraq. Our issue is that Iraq must be disarmed. And that's really where we stand and we've communicated the way we are feeling about that as broadly as we can and we have a very multilateral action on that and I think that that's the best we can ask of our public diplomacy efforts -- talk about what we think, explain how we got there, include all the necessary partners in it and make sure that people understand it as well as they can. But that never guarantees us agreement.

Thank you very much for being here.

(Applause.)

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