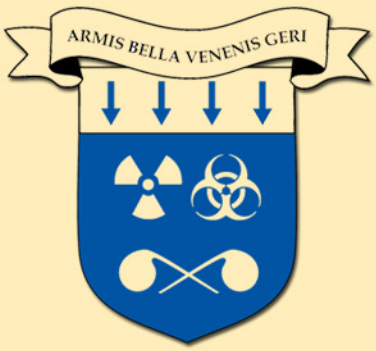
A Message Not Yet Sent

Using Strategic Communications to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction Threats

Richard H. Estes



35

US Air Force
Counterproliferation Center
Future Warfare Series
No. 35

A MESSAGE NOT YET SENT

Using Strategic Communications to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction Threats

by

Richard H. Estes

The Counterproliferation Papers

Future Warfare Series No. 35

USAF Counterproliferation Center

Air University

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

A MESSAGE NOT YET SENT

Using Strategic Communications to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction Threats

Richard H. Estes

July 2006

The Counterproliferation Papers Series was established by the USAF Counterproliferation Center to provide information and analysis to assist the understanding of the U.S. national security policy-makers and USAF officers to help them better prepare to counter the threat from weapons of mass destruction. Copies of No. 35 and previous papers in this series are available from the USAF Counterproliferation Center, 325 Chennault Circle, Maxwell AFB AL 36112-6427. The fax number is (334) 953-7530; phone (334) 953-7538.

Counterproliferation Paper No. 35

USAF Counterproliferation Center

Air University

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama 36112-6427

The Internet address for the USAF Counterproliferation Center is:

http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/awc-cps.htm

Contents

Page

Disclaimer ..... *ii*

Acknowledgements ..... *iii*

About the Author ..... *v*

I. Introduction 1

II. The USAF Counterproliferation Center Project 3

III. Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction 7

IV. Strategic Communications 15

V. Why the Bottom Fell Out 21

VI. Linking Strategic Communications to Combating WMD 27

VII. Where to Start at the National Level 39

VIII. Off and Running:
The New Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy 43

IX. Progress at the Pentagon? 53

X. Final Recommendations 57

XI. Conclusion 59

Notes 61

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, or the USAF Counterproliferation Center.

Acknowledgements

This project was sponsored and funded by the Directorate of Technology Development, Defense Threat Reduction Agency. We at the USAF Counterproliferation Center appreciate the continuing support from this directorate, one of our original and most generous sponsors. Second, I would like to thank the staff at the U.S. Strategic Command, particularly Colonel Scott Land, Colonel Sandy Wade, and Major Don Drechsler, who provided support for this project, arranged many meetings, and participated in workshops. USSTRATCOM, in addition to being a mentor for this project, will eventually be a customer of the results. I also would like to thank personally the countless number of people that I interviewed for this project in 2004 and 2005. Those individuals were more than patient as I mined their experience in the field, and most provided additional contacts and arranged other meetings for me.

Many experts participated in three workshops and symposia, offering their expertise, and in many cases making presentations. They have my thanks and those of the Center.

Finally, I wish to thank the entire staff of the USAF Counterproliferation Center for its support. Dr. Barry Schneider, the Director of the Center, has been involved at every stage of this project, has made presentations, and has offered countless valuable inputs. Ms. Jo Ann Eddy has been instrumental in arranging the finances for the project, and participated directly in all of the workshops, journeying to Washington for the final symposium to manage all of the administrative details. Lt Col (S) Tasha Pravacek also came to Washington to support the symposium, providing both expert and administrative support. Dr. Jerry Post, an associate member of the Center, attended all of the workshops, made multiple presentations, provided valuable contacts, and offered substantial encouragement on the subject. The remainder of the staff provided support throughout for local symposia and workshops, editing and publishing. Thanks to all.

The Author

Mr. Richard H. Estes is the Associate Director of the USAF Counterproliferation Center and President of Estes Consulting. For more than four years, Mr. Estes has focused his efforts for the Center in the Washington, DC, and Tidewater areas of Virginia from his office in Williamsburg. A command pilot, he retired from the Air Force as a colonel in 2000 with over thirty years of wide-ranging service including operational, command, and staff assignments at various levels, and in his final assignment was the Defense and Air Attaché to the Kingdom of Morocco. He also served on the faculty of the Air War College as Director of Regional Studies, and Deputy Department Chairman, Joint Force Employment. He is a graduate in residence of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and Air Command and Staff College, has a BA from NC Methodist College, and holds a Master of Arts in Government and Public Administration from the University of South Carolina.

A Message Not Yet Sent

Using Strategic Communications to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction Threats

Richard H. Estes

I. Introduction

The invasion and occupation of Iraq was a strong message sent by the United States to the world. The message was this: "We can take down your country for just about any reason we want to. And if you purport to have weapons of mass destruction, that's a pretty good reason." How effective this message was, we may never know precisely. A big hammer always receives some attention, and Libya, a little way down the Mediterranean, may have coughed up its WMD programs partially as a result of our invasion– although other factors certainly were involved. But we may never know which states or organizations decided to drop (or do not start) a clandestine program as a result of our actions.

These actions, by themselves, no doubt, had a good effect in places like Libya, but an optimal strategic communications campaign would have used both words *and* actions effectively. A strategic communications campaign, while it benefits from a demonstration of the will to back up words with force, should be better articulated and needs to be more nuanced and repeated over a long-term. Furthermore, many have made the case that our invasion of Iraq, along with the virtual collapse of international support for the United States prior to the invasion, and some questionable actions by U.S. occupiers, have badly tarnished the image of the United States abroad – especially in the Arab world. The United States turned heads with its message of willingness to use force, but failed utterly in communicating the righteousness of the cause. The critical element missing was a coherent message – using precise and planned words, together with other instruments of influence, to explain to the

world why the United States was worthy of being followed – and if not followed, at least understood. What was missing was a coherent strategic communications campaign for the United States – a campaign that needed to be in place long before any invasion.

There is some evidence that the Bush administration has come to the same conclusion. With the appointment of Karen Hughes, a close confidant and advisor to the President, to the post of Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in July of 2005, Mr. Bush has tacitly acknowledged that there is some repair work to be done. She has assumed her post, made her first trips abroad, and established some goals and guidelines for achieving them, but the long-range effect of her appointment is yet to be written. However, a serious name filling a heretofore vacuum is seen by many as a good first step.

At the same time, the move to combat weapons of mass destruction is on the ascendancy within the administration – to the point that combating WMD is arguably the top mission for this government beyond the on-going conflict in Iraq. The Department of Homeland Security is at full speed trying to avoid a WMD calamity within our borders, and recently established an operating Domestic Nuclear Detection Office to team with other agencies within the government to look for nuclear weapons. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld designated the United States Strategic Command in Omaha, Nebraska, in January 2005 as the combatant command within DoD directly responsible for the combating WMD mission. STRATCOM's commander, General James Cartwright, and his staff have been scrambling since early 2005 to devise a plan of action that would be at once effective, and at the same time, palatable to the regional combatant commanders on whose turf such a plan would be executed.

Here, then, are two major sea changes within the administration, occurring at approximately the same time – but on parallel rather than converging paths. The strategic communications effort is lagging the fight to combat WMD, both in developed plans and intensity, but many expect the pace to quicken in the communications arena in coming months. As it does, any new strategic communications campaign for the United States should include thoughtful consideration of employing this little-used tool to combat WMD as well. To be effective, such an effort may require years, not days or months – and the United States should have started long ago. But like investing, the second best time to begin is *now*.

II. The USAF Counterproliferation Center Project

With these changes becoming imperatives for the United States government, the USAF Counterproliferation Center has worked under the sponsorship of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the mentorship of the United States Strategic Command to develop advocacy for a strategic communications campaign to combat weapons of mass destruction.

The project began with a request from the United States European Command for assistance in developing a psychological warfare campaign to combat weapons of mass destruction in its Area of Responsibility – particularly those regions where the United States has little military presence. Over a period of several months, members of the Center, on USEUCOM's behalf, engaged in comprehensive research on the tactical, operational, and strategic programs in place at all levels. In-person interviews were conducted with experts at USEUCOM, U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Strategic Command, the Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Air Staff, Air University, National Defense University, the Joint Special Operations School at Hurlburt AFB, the State Department, the National Security Council, the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the 4th Psychological Warfare Group at Ft. Bragg, several think tanks, independent experts, former ambassadors, and members of the defense industry. Three symposia were held. The first was comprised of members of the Center staff, subject matter experts associated with the Center, and other associate members of the Center. The second was held at Air University with essentially the same cast as the first, but with the addition of faculty and Air War College students who had expertise in the field. The last was an assemblage of experts from across the entire field, and was held in the Washington, DC, area.

Over the course of this research, the team from the Center encountered a shifting landscape that caused the focus of the project to change accordingly. First, USEUCOM, in conjunction with USSOCOM, was found to be performing quite adequately at the tactical and operational level, but seemed to lack a national or strategic level plan into which their efforts could fit. Programs were in place to influence targets at the point of contact, but were not backed by a more comprehensive national

message. Worse, the United States – to put it simply – had and continues to have an image problem in the international community. Magnified significantly by the rancor surrounding the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the aftermath, attitudes had hardened and U.S. messages at any level were finding few persons willing to be persuaded.

At about the time that the team came to the conclusion that its efforts were focused at the wrong level, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld assigned the mission of combating weapons of mass destruction to USSTRATCOM, and to a certain degree that command picked up the mission of strategic communications as well. After consultations with USEUCOM – the original customer for the project – and with DTRA, the USAF Counterproliferation Center team created a briefing for USSTRATCOM and presented it to members of the J5 and J3 staffs in March of 2005. This briefing advocated that the focus of the study be shifted from regional to global – and from the tactical/operational to the strategic level. Furthermore, the team recommended that the mentorship of the project be shifted from USEUCOM to USSTRATCOM. Both commands and DTRA agreed.

The United States Air Force Counterproliferation Center believes that the strategic communications community both in and out of the Department of Defense is in substantial agreement in two areas: (1) until now, there has been little national direction or coordination for overall U.S. strategic communications to the rest of the world explaining our policies and attempting to influence important foreign attitudes, and (2) as we correct this glaring shortfall, which the United States seems to be gearing up to do, we should include a very carefully considered strategic communications campaign for countering the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

The Center has developed findings that were vetted at the final symposium in Washington, DC. Specifically we believe:

1. USSTRATCOM should include in its efforts to combat WMD a strong element of strategic communications.

2. USSTRATCOM should encourage the appointment of a single point of contact for strategic communications within the DoD, and that person should keep the WMD issue front and center as he represents the Department at the national level. Further, the DoD

should speak with that one voice at the national level – and if necessary encourage the interagency process, particularly representatives from the NSC and State Department, to develop and maintain a single, coordinated plan into which all facets of strategic communications fit.

3. While this project is being sponsored and run from within DoD, to be successful, agencies outside of DoD must be engaged – particularly the State Department. Just as those working at the tactical and operational level need strategic-level guidance to be successful, the DoD cannot develop a strategic communications campaign in a vacuum. The entire government from the President down must be involved – and must want that campaign to succeed.
4. No strategic communications campaign will be successful until steps are taken first to repair the image of the United States abroad. This could be a process requiring many years – perhaps decades – and the primary tool for this process must be a greatly enhanced public diplomacy effort. This process must have the support of the President, must have a working infrastructure, and must be tailored by regional experts to fit its intended targets. Karen Hughes cannot do this alone; she must establish a process that will outlive her tenure at the State Department, and one that reaches beyond that department.
5. As others have noted, policies matter.[1] A bad policy cannot be fixed with a good strategic communications plan, nor is putting the best spin on an already executed policy good strategic communications. Rather, strategic communications should be considered as part and parcel of policy formulation at the outset. How a policy fits into the message that already exists – or the United States wishes to send – should be carefully considered by policy makers.
6. While a strategic communications campaign for combating WMD could serve as a template for other facets of a national communications plan, a stand-alone campaign for WMD seems destined for failure without the support and infrastructure of that overarching national campaign.

This project is one of problem identification, gap analysis, and advocacy. That advocacy already has led indirectly to the inclusion of strategic communications as a "strategic enabler" in the National Military Strategy for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction.[2] The Counterproliferation Center expects that a follow-on project will be approved and funded, and that project will give rise to an actual template of a strategic communications plan for combating WMD that can be used by policy makers and regional experts.

III. Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction

The United States has had a well-developed strategy for combating weapons of mass destruction since December of 2002. The National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction[3] opens with an oft-used, but nevertheless on target, quote by President Bush in September of that year:

> The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed….History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action."[4]

This quote has proven to be a policy driver. Venn diagrams started to appear on many PowerPoint slides showing the nexus of terrorism and WMD. *There*. *Right there* where the two circles intersect is what this country needs to worry about. Furthermore, said the briefers and policy makers, that hatched area where two calamitous forces intersect could occur right here in the United States. There are those out there who are building bombs and creating biological weapons and they intend to visit them on the United States, its deployed troops, and allies at the earliest opportunity. And these people probably could not be dissuaded from doing so. Thus the strategy to combat WMD became a clarion call to action.

This new strategy had, and still has, three pillars: *Counterproliferation, Nonproliferation, and Consequence Management.*[5] On the day this new strategy hit the street just before Christmas 2002, newscasters heralded a major shift in national strategy. Here was a strategy with *counterproliferation* as its centerpiece. Granted, we would prefer that states and terrorist organizations not seek WMD in the first place, and we would certainly pursue diplomatic and economic measures to try to prevent proliferation of WMD as we have in the past; this was the *nonproliferation* aspect of our strategy. *But*, and this was a big "but," if any rogue player, acting outside of international law and norms, chose to

pursue WMD – let alone use such weapons – despite our best nonproliferation efforts to the contrary, we as a last resort were prepared to bring force to bear to take out any illegal weapons. This counterproliferation element of the new strategy was for the first time nonproliferation with teeth in it. Four months later the United States bared those teeth and invaded Iraq.

The third pillar, *consequence management*, was separated from the other two as a method of emphasizing that a WMD event on U.S. soil or elsewhere would have unimaginable consequences – and that every preparation should be made to be prepared to deal with such an attack and its aftermath. This, in effect, gave recovery almost equal priority to stopping the attack in the first place.

Unfortunately, nowhere in this strategy does the administration mention that a good strategic communications campaign could be useful in this endeavor.

Several methods of describing this continuum date back to Secretary of Defense Perry's Eight D's in 1995[6] and all are in some ways similar. In fact, although numerous organizations, including our own, have outlined various ways to view combating WMD, the commonality among these has been remarkable. Each has included a *nonproliferation* set of mission areas and a *counterproliferation* group.

Nonproliferation is the use of the full range of political, economic, and negotiating tools to prevent WMD proliferation to additional states or groups of concern, or to reverse it diplomatically once it occurs (rollback).[7] The idea here is to keep countries and non-state actors from obtaining WMD in the first place. A strategic communications campaign would fit nicely within our nonproliferation efforts.

Counterproliferation, on the other hand, refers to the activities of the Department of Defense where it has the lead such as deterrence, offensive operations, active defense and consequence management.[8] While having a good counterproliferation capability is quite useful in deterring an adversary, this same capability is tailored to take out the WMD of an adversary if called upon to do so – and to defend against it if necessary. Again, this is the centerpiece of the current national strategy to combat WMD: to have not only the capability to enforce compliance, but to actually use military measures to protect U.S. forces and allies if necessary. But this capability, without strategic communications, is

essentially "carrying a big stick" without the "speaking softly" element. Some would modify "speaking softly" to "speaking clearly and persuasively."

A look at the continuum that the USAF Counterproliferation Center used previously takes us smoothly through the process as it existed until recently:

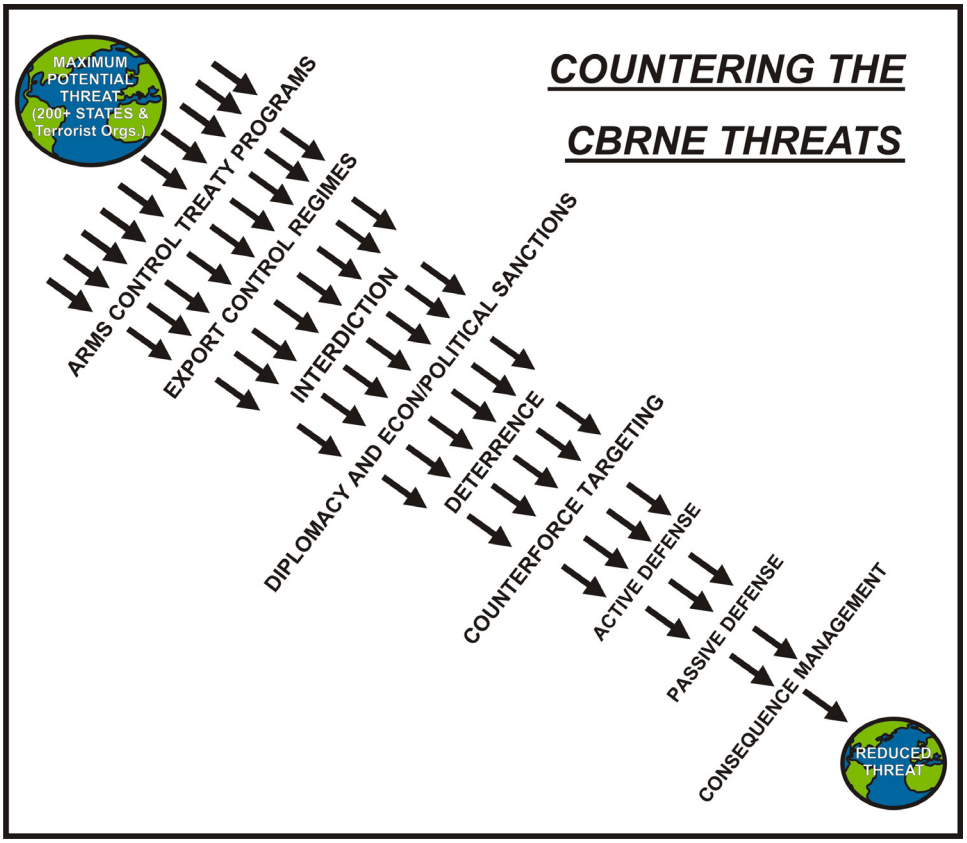


Figure 1. Countering the NBC Threats

Although there is some overlap, the first three mission areas in Figure 1, *arms control* through *diplomacy*, are generally considered to comprise *nonproliferation,* while the last five, deterrence through consequence

management, make up the *counterproliferation* elements of the continuum. This sequence manifests the principle that the more weapons prevented from being in adversary hands through nonproliferation efforts, the fewer that will need to be dealt with using counterproliferation capabilities.

Eight New Mission Areas from the Joint Staff

Countering WMD always has appeared to have some urgency attached to its pursuit. Previous quadrennial defense reviews have acknowledged the threat from WMD, but have failed to describe combating WMD as a primary mission area. Similarly, former Air Force Chief of Staff, John Jumper, produced the "USAF Transformation Flight Plan" in response to QDR 2001 in which the Air Force revolves around six core competencies (air and space superiority, information security, global attack, precision engagement, rapid global mobility, and agile combat support) during his tenure.[9] But again, there was no separate combating WMD core competency, yet combating WMD affects all six, and in turn is affected by these six capabilities. When this sort of ownerless, broad-brush treatment occurs, the lack of focused advocacy results in spotty funding.

OSD and the Joint Staff are now correcting this shortfall. In 2005, the Unified Command Plan was modified to designate the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command as the combatant commander for integrating and synchronizing efforts to combat WMD – the first ever single focal point for that mission. In assigning the combating WMD as a primary mission to the United States Strategic Command, the Secretary of Defense tasked the command to pursue results in eight mission areas:[10]

- Security Cooperation and Partner Activities
- Threat Reduction Cooperation
- Offensive Operations (Preemptive & Reactive)
- WMD Elimination
- WMD Interdiction
- Active Defense

- Passive Defense
- Consequence Management

These mission areas are further reflected in the accompanying chart, Figure 2.[11]

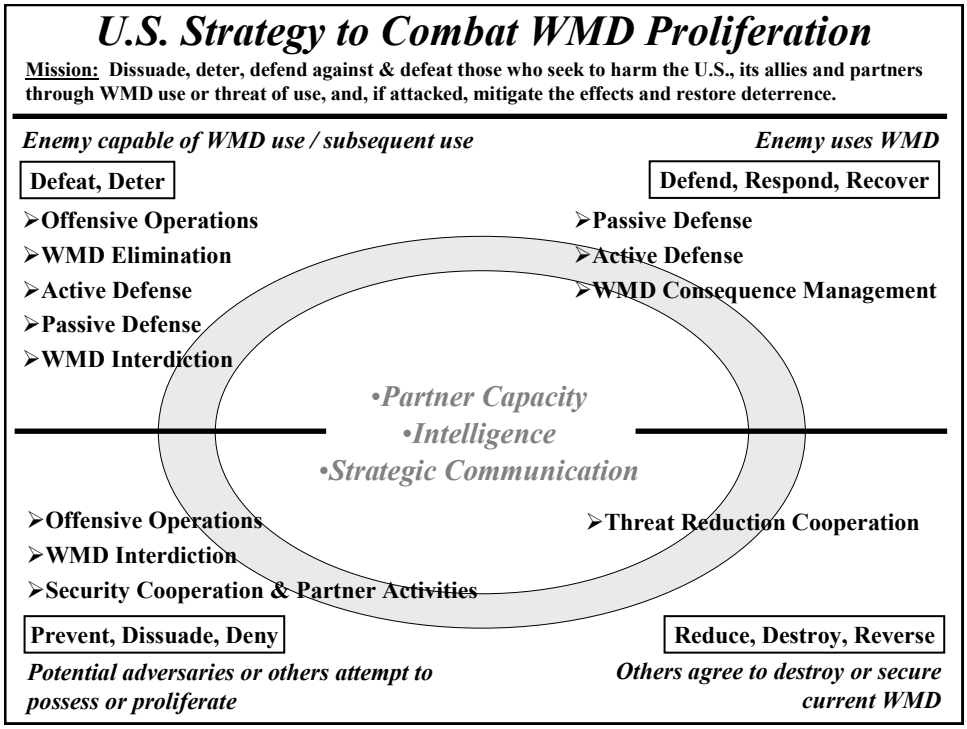


Figure 2. U.S. Strategy to Combat WMD Proliferation

As the military bounds these eight mission areas into the National Military Strategy to Combat WMD as a vehicle to implement the National Strategy to Combat WMD, initial emphasis will be on interdiction and elimination – in large part because the United States sees two significant threats to its security with regards to WMD.

First, WMD in the hands of terrorists are likely to be used. Many experts believe that they are not deterable since many terrorist

organizations such as Al Qaeda have no known return addresses against which to retaliate. Therefore the primary means to avert such a disaster is to interdict any weapons that are being moved by or to terrorists and to keep these weapons out of their hands, and prudence would dictate that posture regardless of one's beliefs on the likelihood of employment. However, organizations could, if acting rationally, have one or more reasons not to employ WMD even if such weapons were in their possession. First a chemical attack might not be spectacular – normally a goal of organizations such as Al Qaeda. For similar reasons, some biological attacks might seem more like a flu epidemic than a terrorist attack. Finally the detonation of a nuclear weapon could be perceived so horrible as to be damaging to the terrorist's cause – or the weapon could be deemed too valuable as a tool of blackmail to be expended. Still, one would not want to bet on such rational behavior, and interdiction is therefore critical.[12]

Second, non-conforming states such as North Korea and Iran apparently possess or are developing WMD. And while these states and others have not been proven conclusively to be undeterable, we must proceed on the assumption that at some point we and our allies may need to deal with existing weapons – either in combat, or in a difficult environment. Finding and eliminating these adversary weapons should therefore be a top priority. We are rightly preparing now for this possibility.

QDR 2006

Indicating even more emphasis on the combating WMD mission, in the Quadrennial Defense Review Report for 2006, senior leaders identified preventing hostile states and non-state actors from acquiring or using WMD as one of four priority areas for examination during the review process.[13] Further, combating WMD is now a major mission area – unlike in previous reviews. The vision for this mission area:

> *The future force will be organized, trained, equipped, and resourced to deal with all aspects of the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction… The Department will be*

> *prepared to respond to and help other agencies to mitigate the consequences of WMD attacks.*[14]

The 2006 QDR identified the need for the following capabilities:

- Special operations forces to locate, characterize, and secure WMD.
- Capabilities to locate, tag, and track WMD, their delivery systems and related materials, including the means to move such items.
- Capabilities to detect fissile materials such as nuclear devices at stand-off ranges.
- Interdiction capabilities to stop air, maritime, and ground shipments of WMD, their delivery systems and related materials.
- Persistent surveillance over wide areas to locate WMD capabilities or hostile forces.
- Human intelligence, language skills, and cultural awareness to understand better the intentions and motivations of potential adversaries and to speed recovery efforts.
- Capabilities and specialized teams to render safe and secure WMD.
- Non-lethal weapons to secure WMD sites so that materials cannot be removed.
- Joint command and control tailored for the WMD elimination mission.
- The capability to deploy, sustain, protect, support, and re-deploy special operations forces in hostile environments.
- The capability to shield critical and vulnerable systems and technologies from the catastrophic effects of EMP.[15]

DoD's initial look at this redefined mission area has great merit, and to the extent the new emphasis moves the United States beyond the purely force protection mode and into the business of stopping these weapons in the first place, is exactly on target. But beyond the clearly undeterables, there are others that *can* be influenced. Allies can be encouraged not to use WMD, others can be encouraged to roll their programs back, still others can be encouraged and assisted to provide better security for the

weapons and material they already possess, and all can be encouraged not to harbor, or otherwise aid terrorists as they seek WMD. What then is called for?

What is needed is something beyond the eight proposed missions areas and the recommendations of the QDR, because – like the *National Strategy to Combat WMD* – strategic communications is not included in the primary line-up. However, in a recent development, the Joint Staff has included "Strategic Communication Support" as a *strategic enabler*[16] to the eight primary mission areas, indicating an increase in the commitment to providing such support. The following words in the current draft are precisely on point:

> *Strategic communications shape perceptions at the global, regional, and national levels. U.S. words and actions reassure allies and partners and underscore, to potential adversaries, the costs and risks associated with WMD acquisition and use.*[17]

With these words, the Joint Staff is stepping out in front in a campaign to use strategic communications to combat WMD. The 2006 QDR also gives a slight nod to strategic communications, but not in the context of combating WMD. Significant work remains to be done.

IV. Strategic Communications

Obviously adversaries, allies, and neutrals look at both actions and words to try to understand how the United States may act and what its intentions are. When words and deeds are congruent, U.S. policy has its most influential impact. But it should be understood that military action is not what is called strategic communications. What are the components of such a program? There are three generally accepted subsets of strategic communications: information operations, public affairs, and public diplomacy. A strategic communications campaign should weave these three elements together in a coordinated effort to advance U.S. interests and policies in concert with other political, economic, information, and military actions.[18] Each of the three subsets can be divided further as shown in the accompanying table.

Information Operations	**Public Affairs**	**Public Diplomacy**
Operational Security	Counsel to leadership	Information
Military Deception	Public trust and support	Engagement[19]
Psychological Operations	Morale and readiness	Influence
Electronic Warfare	Global influence and deterrence	

Figure 3. Subsets of Strategic Communications

A fourth subset, *International Broadcasting Services*, is sometimes listed separately, but it fits quite conveniently under public diplomacy as well. International broadcasting services in this context are funded by governments to transmit news, information, public affairs programming, and entertainment to a global audience using satellite television, AM/FM/shortwave radio, and web-based systems. Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, Radio/TV Marti, Radio Sawi, and Radio Al Hurra are examples of these services.[20]

The United States actually is fairly accomplished in Information Operations and Public Affairs at the tactical and operational level; established programs in both areas are in place to support military commanders and civilian leaders. But these programs suffer from a lack of solid underpinnings that a coherent national-level message would

provide. The third element, Public Diplomacy, could provide that foundation, at least partially, if properly coordinated. It is in the public diplomacy area where the United States has expended very little effort or money, and it is in this arena where much more can be accomplished with a properly focused and supported campaign. This holds true whether one wishes to repair the image of the United States abroad to the point that positive messages can again be sent out, or if the objective is a targeted campaign to combat WMD.

Public Diplomacy

Two significant studies have been published recently among many others that confirm what many have suspected for quite some time: The image of the United States abroad is in such disrepair that it is almost impossible to project positive messages to listening ears until that image is mended. That is not to say that U.S. foreign policy absolutely must be changed to effect perceptions of the United States and its policies. But any policy that we do choose to pursue must be plausible, easily defended and explained – and consideration must be applied to its effect on world opinion and support. A strategic communications campaign must be built along with the policy or policies, and if the administration finds such construction difficult, perhaps the policy itself requires reexamination. A quick look at the two defining reports follows. Both point to a strong dose of public diplomacy as one of the fixes.

The Defense Science Board Report on Strategic Communications. "Strategic communications is a vital component of U.S. national security. It is in crisis, and it must be transformed with a strength of purpose that matches our commitment to diplomacy, defense, intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security. Presidential leadership and the bipartisan political will of Congress are essential. Collaboration between government and the private sector on an unprecedented scale is imperative. To succeed, we must understand the United States is engaged in a generational and global struggle about ideas, not a war between the West and Islam."[21]

This study, completed in September of 2004, was led by Dr. Vincent Vitto, Chairman and CEO of the Charles Stark Draper Laboratory and member of the Defense Science Board, and received wide distribution,

carrying considerable weight (if not action) in and outside of the department.

Aside from concluding that our strategic communications apparatus is broken, the DSB study was significant for pointing out that we need an entirely different way of communicating, and that in the Arab and Muslim world, such a communication channel for the most part does not exist. Furthermore, at least in the Arab and Muslim world, there are precious few people even susceptible to listening to our approaches – if we possessed that communications channel in the first place. But additional analysis shows that the man on the street at the time of the report was opposed to many of our *policies* toward their world, not so much to our *values*. We have room to work here, particularly if we leverage the private sector. And, in some cases, we may want to recast some of our existing policies that rub so many the wrong way.

***Changing Minds Winning Peace* – the Djerejian Report.** "Today, the public diplomacy challenge is less about being the source of reliable news and information and more about engaging listeners awash in misinformation, culture-clashing, and growing anti-Americanism."[22] This alarming statement is from an excellent study, *Changing Minds Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World,* commissioned by the House Appropriations Committee in 2003 – members of which were concerned that the apparatus of U.S. public diplomacy was inadequate, especially in the Arab and Muslim world. The committee directed the State Department to form an advisory group which would recommend new approaches, initiatives, and program models to improve public diplomacy.

Former ambassador to Syria and Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, Edward P. Djerejian, was appointed to chair this advisory group. As Director of the Institute for Public Policy at Rice University, Ambassador Djerejian was able to assemble a quite distinguished group of diplomats, journalists, academics, economists, and John Zogby, the pollster, who together visited Egypt, Syria, Senegal, Morocco, the United Kingdom, Turkey, and France. In addition, the group consulted sources in Indonesia and Pakistan via video conference.

This group focused exclusively on the Arab and Muslim world, and did not consider weapons of mass destruction as a subject for public

diplomacy, but the results are nevertheless instructive on the larger problem of a national message. Among the findings:

- "The United States today lacks the capabilities in public diplomacy to meet the national security threat emanating from political instability, economic deprivation, and extremism, especially in the Arab and Muslim world."
- "If you do not define yourself in this part of the world, the extremists will define you." (from a Moroccan official)
- "By a greater than 2-1 margin, Muslims surveyed in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan said that the United States was a more serious threat than Iraq."
- "The bottom has indeed fallen out of support for the United States."[23]

Later, we'll examine a few of the suggested fixes from both of these studies.

A Significant Third Report. While not aimed specifically at public diplomacy, a third report has implications from a galaxy of experts that cannot be ignored when assembling a strategic communications campaign. Focused on the Arab world, *From Conflict to Cooperation: Writing a New Chapter in U.S.-Arab Relations*,[24] was developed by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and headed by William Cohen, former Secretary of Defense, and now head of the Cohen Group. The project chair was Edward Gabriel, former Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco. Among the findings:

- Getting Iraq right is a necessary but not sufficient step in rebuilding credibility in the Arab world. The committee saw very little hope that Iraq could ever become an inspiration to the Arab world.
- U.S. policies must be backed by consistent principles. Again, policies matter, and linking them with a message reflecting our principles is critical.
- Anti-Americanism has sky-rocketed since 2002, and these attitudes are related more to U.S. policies than values.

- Arab majorities want help with improving quality of life – not necessarily political reforms.
- Arabs receive most information from the Arab media, but also are eager to visit the United States. Most Arabs with this direct exposure have more favorable impressions of America and its values.
- Any approach to the Arab world must focus on its people as well as the governments, and there is little future in investing time and effort in countries and people that are not at least somewhat receptive to U.S. overtures.[25]
- The committee was impressed with the avenues of communication open to improve U.S.-Arab relations. Because of technology and travel, Arab citizens are able to think and interact beyond their borders.

V. Why the Bottom Fell Out

Not Just a Recent Problem. Using dozens of interviews with communications professionals over the past year, and drawing on some personal diplomatic experience abroad within the past few years, one can easily discern how the United States finds itself in this predicament. And the difficulties do not begin with the present Bush administration, the September 11, 2001, attacks or the United States' invasion of Iraq. Rather, they can be traced to the end of the Cold War and the supposed "end of history" that would lead to liberal democracy everywhere.[26] This collective and premature sigh of relief led to increasingly isolationist sentiment throughout the 1990s. The election of the quite conservative Congressional Class of 1994 led by Newt Gingrich exacerbated this mood, and that group and subsequent Congresses threw every impediment possible in the way of increased diplomatic involvement abroad. The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1995 to 2001, Jesse Helms, Republican from North Carolina, contributed mightily to isolationist policies, using his committee to only minimally fund State Department operations and foreign aid – to the point that any "nice to do" programs fell by the wayside. Then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was heard to voice her frustrations in a small gathering saying, "I can make only so many trips to North Carolina" (to engage the Chairman on these issues).

A further casualty of the era was the United States Information Agency (USIA), which was incorporated into the State Department proper in 1999. For nearly fifty years, USIA explained policies in ways crafted to promote better and more widespread appreciation of why we do what we do. This program was a priority of every president through George H.W. Bush. The agency trained foreign service nationals who would represent the United States' policies in the host country's language, and along the way opened libraries and study centers at which local citizens could find newspapers, books, and magazines representing American culture and politics.[27] When USIA was absorbed into the State Department, USIA officers lost a good bit of their autonomy and separate funding. And when the underfunded larger department was flying on fumes rather than a full tank of fuel, those libraries, reading corners, formal speaking programs,

cultural programs, and other outreach endeavors were the first things jettisoned.

My experience at the United States Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, in the late 1990s is a case in point. Although admittedly not a post absolutely crucial to U.S. foreign policy on its face, Morocco was emblematic of diplomacy that suffered from lack of funding and direction. Here was a country that had been an ally during the Cold War, and was indeed a proxy for us in North Africa against a Soviet-supplied Algeria. Further, it was a country that was a full-fledged player in the Arab and Muslim arena that could have been encouraged to come along with the United States, if not on all policies, at least on many of them. Morocco was an Islamic country whose government was adamantly against militant Islam – but was a bit more heavy-handed about keeping the movement under control than the United States would have been under similar circumstances. Morocco was a moderate Islamic country that, while it did not allow proselytizing for other religions, had a thriving Jewish community, and allowed churches of other denominations to function. The Moroccans had a spotty record on human rights, but were four-square against weapons of mass destruction. In fact, when it was rumored that Algeria may be storing WMD for Saddam Hussein in the late nineties, the Moroccan government became much more interested (or at least less adverse) to U.S. opposition to the Baathist regime in Iraq. And since 1999, Morocco has had a king, who, while still a monarch in every sense, has allowed more and more vestiges of democracy, and has eased repression as his reign progresses.

This was an Arab Islamist state that was susceptible to a carefully crafted influence program aimed at its government and people – a country on which a strategic communications campaign almost certainly would have had some effect.

Instead, the United States supplied virtually no military aid and there was no formal speakers program. No American cultural programs were brought into the country, and the U.S. Information Service, now part of the State Department, closed its very popular Dar America (American Home) library and research center. This vacuum was happily filled by the French, Spanish, Chinese, and others who targeted Morocco with many of the tools of diplomacy that the United States had failed to fund.

This is not to say that the United States did nothing. At the time, the very activist U.S. ambassador almost single-handedly created a speaking and influence program of his own – but with little support or central guidance from Washington. And there certainly was no coordinated communications message that was supplied to him to help him show how Morocco fit into the plans for United States foreign policy writ large. The U.S. Navy occasionally sent warships into Casablanca, and forums were held for journalists. The ambassador firmly resisted building a new "crusader castle" embassy at the edge of town, opting for the accessibility of the down-town embassy with beefed-up security over the absolute security of a new embassy. But there were still relatively few programs available to get the American story out. The Moroccans watched the United States bomb and later invade Iraq and Afghanistan with the benefit of few, if any, formal attempts to present a favorable side of those actions, or a favorable side of the United States itself.

Today, while the Moroccan government still looks for ways to cooperate with the United States, acting against terrorism where it can and attempting to hold the line against militant Islam, 88% of Moroccans view the United States and its policies with disfavor,[28] and a disproportionate number of arrested or suspected terrorists had their origins in Morocco. While it is difficult to find a direct cause and effect relationship between an outreach vacuum by the United States and the attitudes of Moroccans on the street, one can't help but think a coordinated effort on the part of the United States would have paid dividends. And it is clear that militant Islamists *do* have a coordinated effort, actively recruiting nascent terrorists from *bidonvilles*, the shanty towns in the large cities such as Casablanca. The message to these disaffected was, "Come with us, fight the infidels. We'll provide for you and your families both spiritually and physically." They did and they did, and smoking ruins in Casablanca and Spain are the legacy.

The War on Terrorism, September 11, 2001, and the Bush Administration. The world has changed extremely fast, faster than most of us anticipated. And we made some of those changes ourselves. As we coasted through the post Cold War world of the 1990s, stock market on the rise, crime on the decline, an easy war fought with Iraq in 1991 with international support, and no Soviet Union to worry about after 1991, we became a bit complacent. What we did not see as we won that war with

Saddam Hussein and were victorious in the Cold War, a new conflict was beginning that we did not anticipate, what James Woolsey had termed the "Long War of the 21st Century" – the war between Islamic extremists and the West. We didn't quite see the warning signs accumulating: the debacle in Mogadishu, the first attempt on the World Trade Center in 1993, the embassy bombings in 1998, and other lesser events.

While we used our extraordinary capabilities to intervene internationally without too much trouble on an *ad hoc* basis (Bosnia for example), we saw little reason for overseas involvement – or for the creation of a strategic communications strategy that would serve us in this new world. Some saw our view as saying, "We have all the marbles; let the other guys figure out how to coexist with us." A bit of hyperbole to be sure – the United States has always accomplished numerous good deeds around the world – but the basic point is valid. We did not see anything or anybody on the horizon that we couldn't handle, nor did we fully sense the building resentment of our monolithic wealth and power.

Then came September 11, 2001. The surprise attacks brought with them the sympathy of the world – including that of a significant portion of Arabs and Muslims. We rightly chose a path of strength and resolve, our message being "Either you are with us, or you are against us." We garnered widespread support for our take-down of Afghanistan and the pursuit of Osama bin Laden. But then the international relations nightmare began – a nightmare that continues into 2006, and one that requires this new strategic communications campaign to help shift world opinion in our favor once again. More than world opinion, we need those outside our borders to *believe* in us.

As far as much of the world was concerned, the United States took a wrong turn in 2002 as we shifted our attention from Afghanistan to Iraq. There was a prevailing belief among our allies and others that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction at some time in the past and probably still had at least chemical and biological weapons – if not a fully functioning nuclear weapons program. There was, however, significantly less agreement on Iraq's ties to Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. Furthermore, as the United States marched toward the invasion of March 2003, the international community, including the United Nations, saw the U.S. process as inexorable – with proof of WMD and involvement with the

terrorists' network being fitted to the planned action rather than the other way round. This started the nightmare.

The quick large unit force-on-force victory over the Saddam's armed forces militated in our favor, but the protracted aftermath, both the "untidiness" as Secretary Rumsfeld called the chaos following the invasion, and the continuing resistance from hardliners, has given opponents of the U.S. action reason to say "I told you so." The treatment of prisoners at the Abu Graihb prison and the facility at Guantanemo only has added public protest – both domestic and international. Arab and Muslim adversaries have taken full advantage of these developments and have staged a relentless strategic communications campaign of their own. Between 2002 and 2004, a clear decline in favorable impressions of the United States (of policies certainly – but *values* as well) has taken place throughout the Muslim world. And this decline is not just among radicals who already were predisposed to dislike us. This decline includes moderates – the ones that *we* should be reaching.[29] The nightmare has continued to deepen.

Even with this deepening state of international dissatisfaction with the United States, it remains the world's greatest democracy and it accomplishes some wonderful things around the world. Not only that, our actions in the war against terrorism are undoubtedly making the world a safer place. But the *perception* is that the United States has abandoned the U.S. Constitution, the Geneva Convention accords, and the United Nations as it relentlessly pursues its enemies as it sees them. And like it or not, this *perception* exists and will remain until we develop a better way to explain why we do what we do.

There is no question that a well-conceived strategic communications campaign would help in this regard, but we should not be so naïve as to believe that even a perfect campaign would accomplish our goals abroad. As the Defense Science Board pointed out, policies matter and cannot be separated from communications. At the same time though, we should not be surprised at reactions to our policies. A policy should be communicated in a way that allows intelligent people to make up their own minds as to the efficacy of the policy.[30] Finally, the best U.S. strategic communications program will be divorced from claiming too much, from sounding like the U.S. leadership has a corner on intelligence or virtue. U.S. policy and the explanations given for it must evidence, as

Thomas Jefferson once advocated, "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind." Claiming too much rectitude, too much moral superiority, and too much certainty about the absolute correctness of the American cause does not persuade the part of the world that is already suspicious of U.S. motives and fearful of U.S. power. Such an arrogant attitude just confirms their previous negative biases. Senator J. William Fulbright, then the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said it best in 1966, words still fresh almost forty years later:

> *The attitude above all others which I feel sure is no longer valid is the arrogance of power, the tendency of great nations to equate power with virtue and major responsibilities with a universal mission. The dilemmas involved are preeminently American dilemmas, not because America has weaknesses that others do not have but because America is powerful as no nation has ever been before and the discrepancy between its power and the power of others appears to be increasing….If America has a service to perform in the world, and I believe it has, it is in large part the service of its own example. In our excessive involvement in the affairs of other countries, we are not only living off our assets and denying our own people the proper enjoyment of their resources; we are also denying the world the example of a free society enjoying its freedom to the fullest. This is regrettable indeed for a nation that aspires to teach democracy to other nations…*[31]

Intelligent people can differ over the degree to which the United States should be involved overseas. But it is difficult to find fault with a strategic communications campaign and accompanying policies that correct misperceptions and lessen the perception of American arrogance as we do involve ourselves in the affairs of the world. We don't require that the world loves us or our policies – which necessarily may be hard-hitting. What we require is that the world *understands* our policies and that we mean well. Such an understanding would translate to an amelioration of world views of American values – a basis of confidence on which a further positive message campaign can be built.

VI. Linking Strategic Communications to Combating WMD

Clearly the United States suffers from an image problem in the international community. Correcting that image should be top priority – in order that other, more specific, messages can be heard. One of these more specific messages, and one that should not be far from the top of the list, is a concentrated effort to convince the world that weapons of mass destruction pose the greatest threat to mankind, and keeping those weapons out of irresponsible hands should be uppermost in the minds of leaders worldwide, and should be central to security policy everywhere. How one would put such a campaign together varies according to who is doing the planning. But the experts brought together by the USAF Counterproliferation Center all agree on one thing: There should be such a campaign. The following are thoughts on the process.

Assure, Dissuade, Deter, Defeat. These four defense policy goals were articulated in the Quadrennial Defense Review in 2001, and much of DoD planning has been based on those words – including the 2005 National Defense Strategy. This continuum is part of any logical security policy planning process, not just military – and indeed is used in the language of the *National Strategy to Combat WMD*. All of the elements of strategic communications should be used vigorously to some degree as U.S. policy makers navigate the peacetime actions of assuring*, dissuading, and deterring*. But communications take on a distinctly operational and tactical bent as changing circumstances cause us to go into combat to defeat the enemy with our military forces. Therefore, any *strategic* communications campaign to combat WMD would necessarily tend to concentrate on the three peacetime activities.

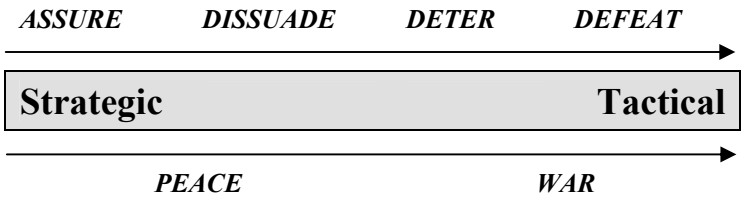


Figure 4. Defense Policy Goals

Of the three elements, the term that seems most useful is "dissuade" – particularly when using strategic communications to prevent the acquisition, development, trade in, supplying of WMD, or assistance to adversaries who seek or possess such weapons: What words do we use to persuade potential enemies to stay out of the WMD business entirely? Dissuasion, of course, is more all-encompassing than just a communications strategy or words. For example, a program of developing preemptive capabilities or building defenses, being poised to physically remove a WMD capability, and being prepared to respond to an attack ("resiliency" as Dr. Paul Bernstein of SAIC phrases it), also are methods of dissuading a potential adversary from taking an action – as is an acquisition program so technologically superior as to persuade the adversary that any WMD acquisition program of its own would be futile and perhaps dangerous. An effective strategic communications campaign could be a tool to aid in these efforts – but it could be a stand-alone endeavor as well.

Colonel Chuck Lutes of the National Defense University interprets the National Security Strategy to imply that dissuasion would be most effective in preventing acquisition of WMD programs and that deterrence, through the threat of retaliation or denial of results if used, would be most effective in preventing use of weapons already acquired.[32] Strategic communications would seem to have a role in both. And we should not fail to mention the efficacy of using strategic communications to *assure* allies and others that our intentions are pure and our actions will not be harmful to their interests as we pursue our security policy. Lutes also makes the point that dissuasion becomes increasingly more difficult as targeted audiences become less friendly and more irrational, a useful formulation when considering a strategic communications campaign.[33]

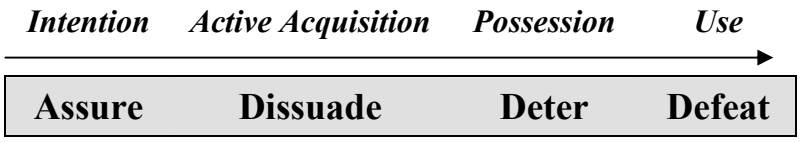


Figure 5.

Narrowing the Scope. A working hypothesis then, would be that a strategic communications campaign to combat weapons of mass destruction

should be focused initially where it has the best opportunity for success. While, attempting to win the hearts and minds of those who would do us harm is a tempting objective, we may be better off rebuilding bridges to our allies and to neutrals, bringing along other rational international audiences that could be allies in the future, and using them to help make inroads against rogue states. A persuasive campaign that directly targets those in the shadowy underworld of arms merchants, criminals, and terrorists, seems doomed to failure until these people and organizations are more isolated in the world. Far better to use strategic communications to help isolate them than to target them for conversion directly. So first, let's get the help of our friends – and make more of them while we are at it.

The second part of the hypothesis is that dissuading rational states from acquiring WMD programs in the first place is easier than causing programs to be rolled back or dismantled. Much more difficult still is dissuading a terrorist organization or rogue state from pursuing a WMD capability. A well-structured campaign would explain why our policies (and those of our trusted allies) would make us good risks to possess some weapons, and why it would not be to the advantage of other states to acquire their own WMD instead. As Dr. Brad Roberts of the Institute for Defense Analyses points out, the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review laid this out quite nicely:

Assure Allies and Friends	**Deter Aggressors**
• Credible non-nuclear and nuclear response options support U.S. commitments • Defenses protect security partners and power projection forces • Second-to-none nuclear capability assures allies and public	• Nuclear and non-nuclear options provide a tailored deterrent • Defenses discourage attack by frustrating adversary's attack plans • Infrastructure improves U.S. capabilities to counter emerging threats
Dissuade Competitors	**Defeat Enemies**
• Diverse portfolio of capabilities denies payoff from competition • Non-nuclear strike favors U.S. • Infrastructure promises U.S. competitive edge	• Strike systems can neutralize a range of enemy targets • Defenses will provide protection if deterrence fails

Figure 6. QDR: Defense Policy Goals

Dr. Roberts advocates a tough strategic communications policy with potential adversaries, emphasizing the consequences of possession and bad behavior. This would take place against the backdrop of the reassurance of our allies and friends that the United States is there for them in this war against weapons of mass destruction – while demonstrating responsible stewardship of the stockpile the United States possesses. This last requires the maintenance of absolute credibility by America, and the avoidance of "mirror imaging" – projecting our own strategic culture onto those we wish to influence – requiring regional experts to assist in crafting any strategic communications campaign. All of this encompasses the full range of assurance, dissuasion, and deterrence objectives, and is more than just a complement to policy; strategic communications is an essential means to desired ends.

Dr. Barry Schneider, Director of the USAF Counterproliferation Center, applies *assure, dissuade, deter, and defeat* to the more specific task of combating WMD, particularly as it applies to Jihadists. (See Figure 7.)

But, what about our allies, and near allies, that possess nuclear weapons who might be tempted to use them in a regional conflict not involving us? How does our strategic communications campaign work the next time India and Pakistan decide to lock and load their nuclear weapons and aim them at one another? How do we keep Israel's finger off of the nuclear trigger if its existence is threatened by a neighboring Arab state? In both of these cases, we would seem to be in the dissuasion business rather than that of deterrence. These countries would not likely deem it credible that the United States or an ally would attack India, Pakistan, or Israel to prevent a nuclear war on the subcontinent or in the Middle East. Neither would retaliation by us make sense in the case of a nuclear weapon use by one of them. Instead the United States is left with other tools like economic and political carrots and sticks to try to persuade these states to do the right thing. One tool that currently is missing is a strategic communications program to educate the elites and populations on the advantages of WMD nonproliferation and non-use, and the acute disadvantages of an opposite policy. The United States has, of course, leaned on these countries in the heat of crises past – and has been successful. But also to do the work ahead of time through strategic communications is eminently sensible. Still, this part of the campaign breaks the mold somewhat – using dissuasion to prevent *use* by potential actors, be they adversaries, allies, or neutrals.

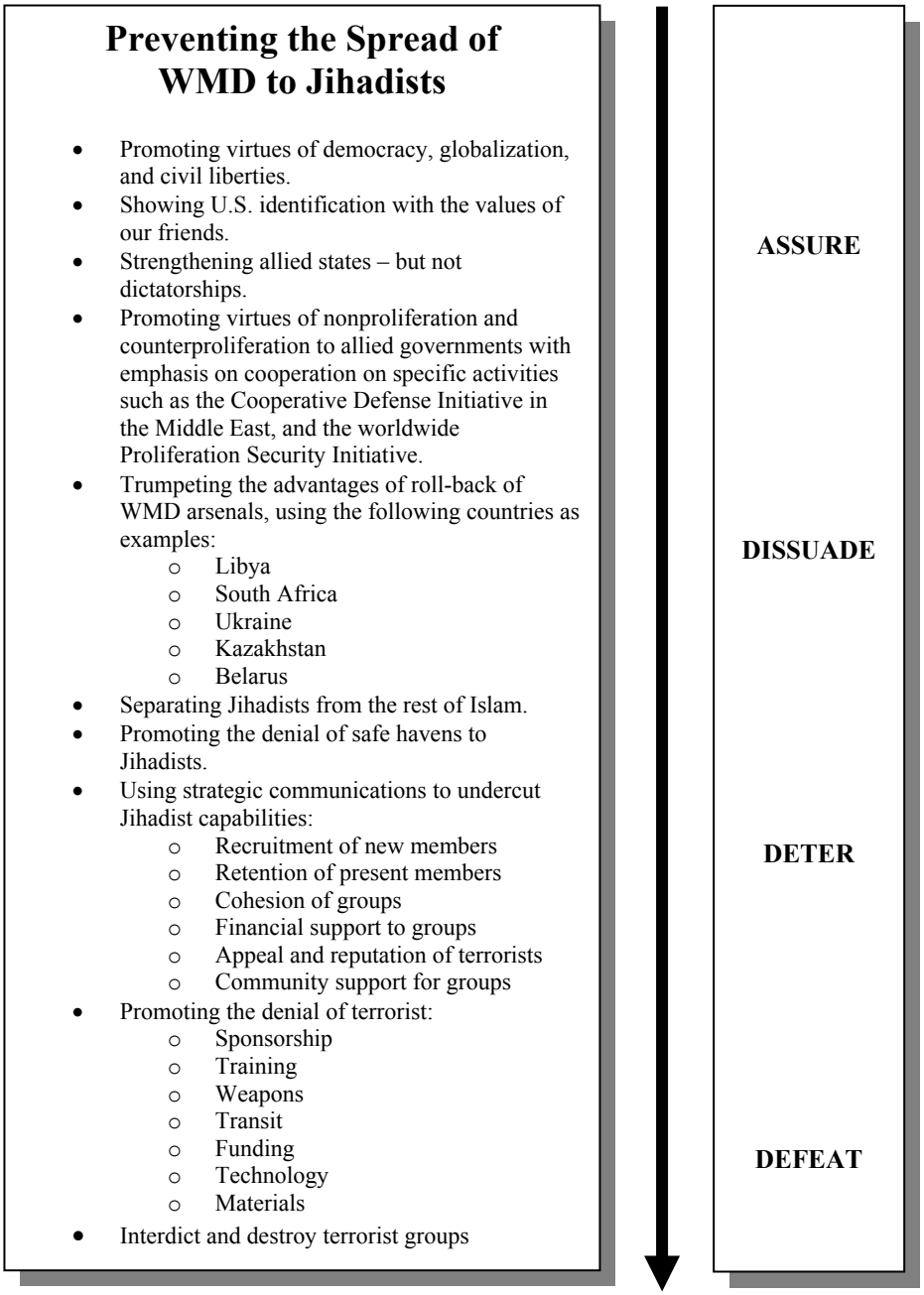


Figure 7. Preventing the Spread of WMD to Jihadists

An additional, but perhaps less likely regional scenario would be that of South Korea reengaging in a nuclear weapons program in response to the threat from the North. The United States has headed off that scenario in the past through dissuasion based on a threat to withdraw U.S. forces if the ROK proceeded with a WMD program, but strategic communications could be quite helpful in this regard. Of course, the United States must be willing to defend those states like the Republic of Korea if they were to pledge not to acquire a nuclear force of their own. However, if we are willing to provide an extended deterrence shield, the strategic communications tool can facilitate such restraint on the part of our allies.

Finally, putting all of this together, as Colonel Lutes suggests, increasing the number of instruments of policy enhances the dissuasive effect, but also increases the complexity of the task:

Aims of a U.S. Strategic Communications Effort	
Increase Costs to acquire WMD	***Reduce benefits from possessing/using WMD***
• **Delegitimize WMD possession** –*Public diplomacy* –*Strategic Information Operations* • **Impose political/economic costs** –*Robust multilateral nonproliferation regimes backed by inspections* –*Sanctions for violators* • **Restrict/deny access** –*Export/technology controls* –*Information security enhancements* –*Cooperative Threat Reduction Program* –*Interdiction (Proliferation Security Initiative)* –*Law enforcement action* • **Raise the bar** –*Maintain U.S. nuclear force levels above those of adversaries*	• **Information operations** –*Persuade* –*Confuse* –*Neutralize* • **Detection/monitoring/ attribution capability** –*Enhanced ISR* –*Predictive Intelligence* • **Preempt/Strike** –*Global Strike offensive capability* –*Special Operations Forces* –*Agent Defeat Weapons* • **Defend and Recover** –*Active Defense* –*Passive Defense and mitigation* –*Consequence management*

Figure 8. Aims of a U.S. Strategic Communications Effort

Adding Elements of Information Operations. Up to this point the discussion has revolved around those activities that can be accomplished through public or private diplomacy – including international broadcasting. The United States and its allies have other capabilities at their disposal, and should include them in any strategic communications campaign.

Psychological operations and some forms of electronic warfare can be and are used quite effectively to target population segments with messages based on specific themes. For example, the United States European Command has created a web site, *The Southeast European Times,* aimed at the people of the Balkans, designed to present news, information and comment. This is a straightforward news site, but the fact that the United States and the European Command are behind the on-line publication, which has been updated daily, provides opportunities for both to present U.S. policies and values in a favorable light. Is this propaganda? Maybe. Is it good strategic communications? Definitely, if properly focused. This is an example of a program that works well, but might be ever so much more effective if it was were carried out as part of a larger national strategic communications campaign.

A recent story was published by the *Los Angeles Times* concerning an information operations scheme to pay legitimate Iraqi newspapers to publish articles written by Americans.[34] This operation has caused somewhat of a furor, with discussions about the legitimacy of such an operation, as well as its efficacy. The United States has doctrine for information operations to assist commanders, particularly those engaged in combat, and this operation could fit into that category – although several high-ranking officials say this one has drifted into a "gray" area since the sources of the articles were not clearly delineated.[35]

On the other hand, clumsy attempts at information management such as this one could be counterproductive. A disingenuous plan made public could very well have the opposite effect intended – particularly in such a high-visibility region as Iraq. If winning the hearts and minds of allies and would-be allies is the goal, and confidence building and assurance is one of the means, surely a thinly-veiled clandestine effort such as the one uncovered in recent days is to no one's advantage. The discovery of such an effort makes listeners or readers question all further information from that source. Furthermore, the free press in the United States and elsewhere

will make it into such a negative event that the United States government image will be further tarnished once under-cover propaganda operations are revealed.

Finding the Right Buttons to Push. Judging which individuals or groups in a particular country or organization should be targeted should fall to regional experts capable of best determining the policy and influence purveyors there. These targets could include members of the general population, government members, moderate religious leaders, military elites, and economic elites. Influencing states or organizations through others in a particular region can be a particularly effective course of action if experts are aware of regional sensitivities – by using existing lines of communications and creating new ones, by isolating a country or group in a region, playing on a regional conflict there, or by creating good will in the region.

The process of locating and concentrating on pressure points – in this case using strategic communications – is the process of *effects-based operations*. In the world of putting real bombs on targets, effects-based operations lead the targeteers to seek targets, the destruction of which would produce a desired effect, rather than just obliterating everything on the target list. For example, hitting the bank belonging to the minister that finances arms sales to terrorists could stop the financing – and get the attention of that policy maker at the same time.

The same process should apply to strategic communications. The United States should use regional experts to find the right buttons to push. They could provide answers to some key questions such as: Whom can we influence to write that key editorial in a paper that will actually publish the piece? [Note, this is actually influencing someone to spread our message, not paying a paper to take a story as has happened recently in Iraq.] Where can we provide talking points through friendly sources to clerics who in turn are reaching over a billion Muslims? Which country is ready to move beyond confidence and trust-building themes to allow a more proactive policy?

But as Dr. Paul Bernstein of SAIC points out, there has been a dramatic decline in regional studies in the United States. Americans have traditionally been poor at foreign languages, having little incentive to learn languages that are used several thousand miles away. This propensity to speak only English decreases the ability to study a region in its native

language. Thus even where programs exist, studies are only accomplished through the filters of translation and interpretation. Unfortunately, in most U.S. colleges and universities there has been a trend away from the intensive study of countries, regions, and cultures. Indeed, many colleges and universities don't have regional programs at all. Similar difficulties are encountered in the Intelligence Community, but for different reasons. Global priorities have caused under-staffed agencies to focus on regions and countries of primary interest. In-depth studies of countries of lesser significance to the United States would need to be accomplished almost from scratch when the need became apparent.

Dr. Barry Schneider believes that regional experts should include the following when constructing a strategic communications plan based on national policy priorities. He would follow these steps:

1. Use and build on in-depth knowledge of the region and culture.
2. Formulate specific objectives based on national policy priorities.
3. Map regional perceptions of the United States, its policies, and its values.
4. Map influence networks.
5. Focus on doable tasks.
6. Cultivate and use credible messengers.
7. Employ relevant channels of communications.
8. Monitor success and failure. Develop metrics if possible.
9. Sustain the campaign over time.
10. Corollary: Don't expect immediate results.

One process should be added to this formula or planning process, and that step should be fit into the early going, perhaps between steps one and two:

1-a. Listen to the priorities of legitimate voices in the region and take those into account in crafting a strategic communications campaign – and most importantly, when developing the policy objectives for the region.

A key element of this strategic communications effect-based operations is the method used to deliver messages. The range of delivery methods is broad and can extend from an international speech by the

President of the United States – to a cell phone call targeting a specific individual because of that person's ability to affect policy. This area of delivery means is perhaps the one most open to innovation as technology and imaginative ideas spread around the world.

Targets, Themes, Messages. Once the general concepts of a strategic communications campaign are in place, it is back to the basics of targets, themes, and methods of delivery to execute the campaign. The basics require regional experts, and in the case of the plan to combat WMD – experts in that field as well.

Actual counter-WMD themes and messages are for later stages of this project, should the United States choose to embark on it in earnest. However, any strategic campaign to combat weapons of mass destruction has some international agreements already in place that form a quite effective normative basis for international behavior. For example:

- The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
- The Chemical Weapons Convention
- The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction

Matching U.S. policies and values to these multi-national treaties in a way that makes sense to the world will be somewhat more difficult. Convincing others, particularly organizations that are not signatories to the treaties, that possession of weapons contrary to the treaties creates insecurity for them rather than security, has proven problematic in the past.

On the brighter side, certainly not every state or group that was capable of developing, deploying, and using nuclear, biological, chemical, or radiological weapons has done so. Indeed, out of the 190+ states in the world, at least 40 or so are considered advanced enough to have already developed nuclear weapons, but it appears that only eight to ten have carried through. The others had good reasons for not going ahead. A strategic communications program should study these motives and use such arguments for WMD restraint in its messages.

A Bit of Realpolitik. Finally, the question of consistency arises. Must the United States treat all actual or potential owners of WMD the same? Clearly the answer is no; as discussed earlier, each state or region should be

addressed with tailored plans. But what about compliance with international norms such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty? The United States has in effect winked at India and Israel, neither of which has signed the NPT, and both of which possess nuclear weapons. Now the United States has agreed to help India with its nuclear energy program – a reward reserved specifically for signatories of the treaty. And of course, Israel is near the top of the list for foreign aid from the United States. We seem to be saying that who you are and how you conduct yourself in the international arena matters more than the weapons you possess.[36] Such an approach could be considered reasonable. [In fact, Mohamed El Baradei, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, recently stated that the United States' policy toward India could make sense, in that India is a democracy with one sixth of the world's population, clearly has nuclear weapons – treaty or no treaty – and is a significant force in Asia and the world. Nuclear energy is important to the Indians, and it seems logical to bring them into the tent of respectability and first world technology – rather than letting them remain unmonitored nuclear outcasts.][37]

But a policy that adhered strictly to the tenets of the NPT could make sense as well. We expect neither Israel nor India to attack the United States with nuclear weapons, but that reasoning is less certain with Pakistan or North Korea, the other non-signatories. Further, what if an *ally* chose to take the North Korean approach of dropping out of the NPT and developing nuclear weapons? Would we stand idly by? The chances are more likely in that case that we would than if the developer were someone inimical to U.S. interests. Thus, the basic dilemma is one of assisting friends that are outside the NPT or other international norms (possibly giving the signal to others that wish to develop WMD that treaty participation has little value) versus consistent application of those norms. The Bush administration's gamble on India seems to be dividing critics, and how that plays out is certainly important. The larger question, however, is that the United States' approach to the NPT is precisely the sort of issue that should be part of any formulation of a strategic communications campaign.

VII. Where to Start at the National Level

Having laid out the need for a national strategic communications policy for the United States, and one that contains a strategy for using that policy to combat weapons of mass destruction proliferation and employment, where do we start? As outlined previously, actual targets, themes, and messages will be tailored by regional and functional experts to fit a national campaign. What remains then, is creating a coherent structure that will put that national campaign in place, creating the national message – on which more specific and targeted second and third tier plans will be based. This coordinated national-level effort has been a missing element in policy in recent years. Many ideas exist for fixing strategic communications for the United States; at last count there were some thirty-two studies.[38] Earlier we highlighted two of the more significant ones and briefly summarized some of their more alarming findings. Here are some of the ideas from the two studies for repairing the system and getting that national-level campaign in place.

Recommendations from the Defense Science Board (DSB). The preponderance of the DSB recommendations revolve around establishing a national structure; those ideas are receiving varying degrees of attention as this is being written:[39]

1. The President should issue a directive to strengthen the government at the national level to better understand global opinion and its effects on policy. Second, the directive should insist on coordination of all components of strategic communication at the national level, and provide a legislative foundation for the planning, coordination, conduct, and funding of strategic communications.
2. The President should establish a permanent strategic communications structure within the National Security Council that includes:
    - A Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications.
    - A Strategic Communication Committee within the NSC.

- An independent, non-profit, non-partisan Center for Strategic Communications. This center would be a 501(c)(3) corporation that would:
  - Provide information and analysis to civilian and military decision-makers on vital security issues;
  - Develop plans, themes, products, and programs for U.S. communications strategies; and
  - Support national strategic communication by mobilizing non-governmental initiatives, fostering cross-cultural exchanges, and recruiting private sector experts for short term assignments.

3. The Secretary of State should redefine and make the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (the Karen Hughes position) more robust with staffing, budget, and decision-making authority.
4. Public diplomacy should become an integral part of the State Department and the careers of Foreign Service officers. Chiefs of Mission should have served at least one prior tour in a public diplomacy assignment.
5. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy should act as the DoD focal point for strategic communication and serve on the NSC's Strategic Communications Committee. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs should act as the focal point for military support for public diplomacy and create a deputy assistant secretary to coordinate this new business.
6. OSD and the Joint Chiefs should ensure that all military plans and operations have appropriate strategic communications components coordinated at the national level, and are adequately funded.

Recommendations from the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy (the Djerejian Report). This study is aimed strictly at public diplomacy to the Arab and Muslim world, but the recommendations,[40] although more State department centric, suggest a beefing up of our national strategic communications structure similar to those of the DSB.

1. Establish a Cabinet-level Special Counselor to the President for Public Diplomacy.
2. Strengthen the role of the Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.
3. Tie the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Defense Department more closely into national-level strategic communications plans.
4. Provide additional funding and staff to fix the "absurdly and dangerously inadequate" levels dedicated to public diplomacy with the Arab and Muslim world.
5. Devote a greater portion of the budget to tap the resources of the Internet and other communication technologies more effectively.
6. Expand English language training along with the scope of the American Corners program in other countries. American Corners are usually located at universities, libraries, or host-country facilities and tell America's story, especially to the young, through books, periodicals, the Internet, music, film, and other means.
7. Create the American Knowledge Library by translating thousands of the best American books and place them in libraries, study centers, universities, and American Corners around the world.

And From One Who Just Left the Interagency Process. Jeff Jones recently left the National Security Council after working strategic communications there for four years. He agrees that the process is non-functional, characterized by the following shortcomings:

- There is an absence of national-level leadership, guidance, and strategy.
- There exists an organizational void, as well as bureaucratic inefficiencies.
- It is an undisciplined process, hindered by the fact that multiple sources of information and technology are not fully fused.
- There are far too few resources devoted to strategic communications at the national level: people, money, technology,

training, and time devoted to making it work all are well below the level of effort needed to succeed.

Jones suggests the following:

1. Empower the recently appointed Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications to work with the new Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to invigorate the interagency process.
2. Ensure the Principals Committee discusses strategic communications at least every quarter, and the Deputies Committee does the same each month.
3. Reactivate the following presently non-functional Policy Coordinating Committees (PCCs):
   a. Strategic Communications PCC
   b. Counter-Terrorism Information Strategy PCC
   c. Muslim World Outreach PCC
4. Create an OMB-led Interagency Working Group to help develop a long-range plan as well as a Capitol Hill strategy.
5. Create or activate a National Security Council web site and DoD Information Management Portal devoted to strategic communications.
6. Create a 21st century version of the United States Information Service.

VIII. Off and Running: The New Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy

Karen Hughes is not really a cabinet-level official – as many of the reports and studies recommended be installed to further public diplomacy. But consider this: The President spoke at her swearing in, she has lunch with the President frequently, and she has been the President's personal counselor for ten years or more – including during her hiatus in Texas while she attended to her self-described "mom duties." She is a close associate of Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State, one of the people closest to the President. All of which is to say Karen Hughes arguably has more access to the President and his inner circle than do most of the people that *are* cabinet officials. She is a first string member of the administration. So what does she plan to do with this access and with this position?

Her background is one of a communicator, having come from TV broadcast journalism. Therefore, she has taken on the role as the *face* of public diplomacy, traveling abroad several times now on extended trips covered extensively by the press, meeting with leaders, students, religious groups, and frequently women representatives of all of those. On a brief trip in November, she traveled to Pakistan to survey earthquake damage and to meet with officials. Her meetings and speeches are certainly emblematic of public diplomacy, and apparently she does a wonderful job on the diplomatic trail by dint of her belief in the United States and its values – and her enthusiasm. However she is but one person. The open question is whether or not she can make public diplomacy *systemic*. Can she be *in charge* of public diplomacy for the government in addition to dispensing it?

Initial Steps Within the State Department. Ambassador Hughes (her new position carries the title of ambassador as well as under secretary) has instituted several programs, primarily within the State Department. First, at the President's direction, she is leading an interagency process that brings together senior policy and communications officials from different agencies to develop a government-wide communications strategy "to promote freedom and democracy, to win the war of ideas, and to set in place the communications strategic plans for the administration."[41] If she causes this process to be successful, she will be the first to have done so in recent years.

The strategic communications interagency process has been broken for some time now, primarily for lack of interest and support from both the White House and the State Department. And there remains but one person at the White House that has any responsibility for strategic communications, the recently appointed Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications – and she is too new on the job to have a track record. The recently departed occupant of the same position stated that there is in fact an interagency organization on paper as shown in the accompanying diagram, but that organization does not actually exist. While the DNSA for Strategic Communications can help bring about a reinvigoration of the process and the organization, it will take the leadership of Karen Hughes to make both productive.

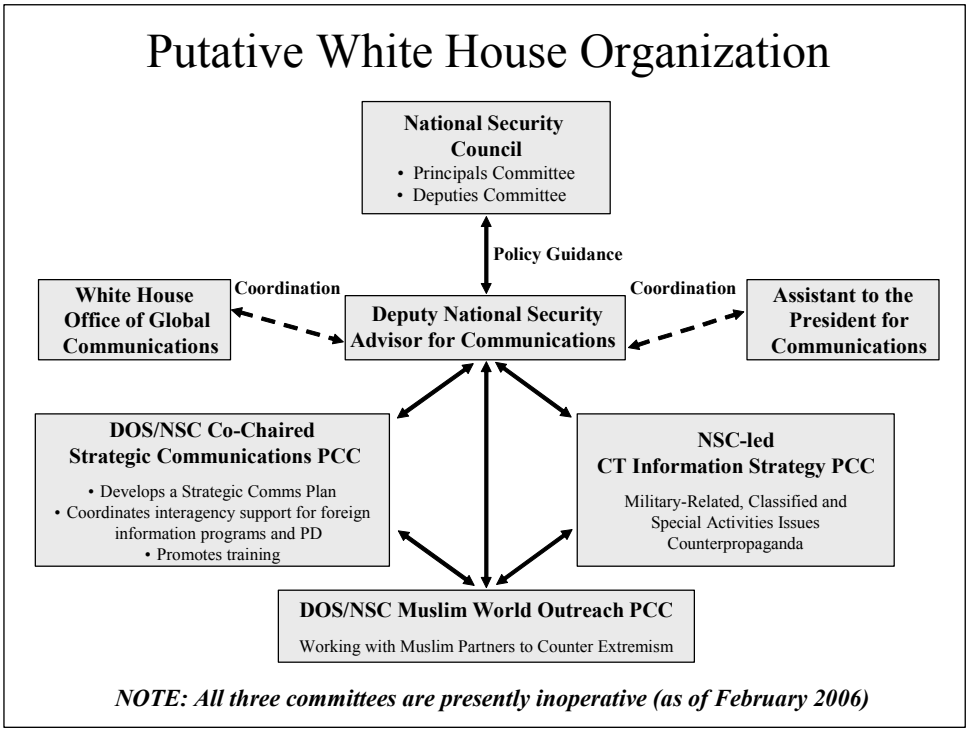


Figure 9. Putative White House Organization

If she can energize these committees and bring people to the table on a regular basis – the right people, and the same people each time – then the interagency process has a chance. But if Hughes is being asked to run a major section of the State Department, and take up the slack for a non-existent White House structure as well, the enterprise seems headed for disappointment. A stalwart shouting into the wind while every other agency, NSC included, goes on about its business will have limited impact. This goes double if the President himself is not fervently supportive of crafting an effective strategic communications campaign. And as Ambassador Hughes said in her opening days, a strategic communications plan – particularly public diplomacy – is a two-way conversation. "It takes two hands to clap."[42] If the President sees her assignment as one of putting spin on intractable policy – and not listening to potential audiences – then the venture is going nowhere.

Second, the new under secretary, with Secretary Rice's support, has instituted a plan that will install a Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Public Diplomacy in each of the regional bureaus within the State Department. That person would report to the Assistant Secretary for the region, but would report also to Under Secretary Hughes. This new position would ensure that public diplomacy is integrated with policy when it is being made, and by reporting to Hughes, would ensure as well that the strategic communications message for the region fits into the larger message for the United States. This fits nicely into the concept that calls for strategic communications and public diplomacy messages to be crafted by the experts that know the region and country – experts that know what buttons to push. The first such DAS, Colleen Graffy, a twenty-year resident of London, has been installed in the European Bureau.

Third, the State Department is expanding its exchange programs, and has increased the budget significantly in that area for 2006 under the direction of Hughes and her Deputy Under Secretary, Dina Powell. In virtually all appearances since her confirmation, Ambassador Hughes has repeatedly said that exchange programs are the single most important public diplomacy tool. She is particularly interested in English language programs and educational exchanges, but there are many others – including military exchanges. In her appearances and speeches, Karen Hughes frequently quotes Edward R. Murrow on saying that "the most important part of public diplomacy is that last three feet. It's that person-

to-person contact."[43] Exchanges certainly qualify as person-to-person contact, and any increase in those programs that Hughes' office can affect is certainly a good start. But it is precisely that sort of approach that must find its way into the interagency process and into other organizations. Ambassador Hughes and her deputy can have an impact here if the policy is carried across the government.

Fourth, Hughes and the State Department are insisting that ambassadors and other foreign service officers become more involved in public diplomacy. To provide emphasis, the under secretary is speaking to all seminars for new ambassadors, and is addressing regional conclaves for ambassadors in the field – to which she insists the ambassadors bring their top public affairs officer for the embassy. She is publishing "alerts" for embassies, current policy and information from high-level meetings in Washington, that can be immediately used in the field by diplomats and other officials without further clearance. Such information should be quite useful for press conferences and speeches, and has the added benefit of being a consistent message across regions. Of course, Emerson said, "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen…," the corollary in this being that messages almost certainly should be customized for different audiences. But having a reserve of cleared policy statements will help keep our diplomats out of trouble as they craft those targeted messages.

Finally, to help the cause further, Ambassador Hughes would like to develop public diplomacy as a viable career path within the State Department. As mentioned earlier, the United States Information Service, USIS, essentially filled that role – and it was dismantled in the 1990s. While she insists that she will be the advocate for that career field, several people interviewed for this project said until a USIS-like organization is reestablished, foreign service officers laboring in the field of public diplomacy, public affairs, and cultural affairs will always have a lower status than political and economic officers when it comes to affairs of state.

The Substance of Karen Hughes' Approach Thus Far. "We're engaged in a fight about our most fundamental and founding values, the freedom to speak our minds, the freedom to worship freely, and as we choose, the freedom to participate in the political process. President Bush has charged me with developing a long-term strategy to ensure that our

ideas prevail."[44] With those words as a basis, Ambassador Hughes has created a strategic framework that has three key components or pillars.[45]

1. The United States must offer a positive vision of hope that is rooted in the President's freedom agenda. Within the foreign policy ranks and elsewhere, there has always existed a gut-wrenching discussion of democracy versus stability as we view potential allies and foes. Is the United States willing to endure the disorder that a nascent freedom movement brings in a target country – and the possible accompanying loss of regional security? Or would the United States prefer to deal with a dictator, benevolent or otherwise, who will keep a lid on his country's people and security – thus allowing the United States and its allies to operate or trade freely in the region? As Secretary Rice has said though, in the Middle East, we have had *neither* stability nor security. Instead conditions became so cancerous that people were willing to kill themselves by flying airplanes into buildings full of innocent people. "So our policy is to stand for freedom, freedom for people to express themselves, to have an opportunity to make an impact, to know their voice can make a difference in the future of their country. Freedom took a long time in this country, so we know that the pace of change will be different in different places. But freedom must be fostered, nurtured, and encouraged." And to quote Secretary Rice again, "It is not liberty and democracy that must be imposed, it is tyranny and silence that are imposed upon people at gunpoint."

2. We must work to isolate and marginalize the extremists and undermine their appropriation of religion. This part of the program, which requires little explanation, is difficult to oppose, but even harder to implement. Ambassador Hughes draws on her many trips with the President to Afghanistan and elsewhere and hastens to point out the severe discrimination, particularly for women, that exists in some Muslim societies. She has illustrated the point using a quote from President Bush: "They wish to make everyone powerless except themselves. They banned books and desecrated historical monuments and brutalized women. They seek to end dissent in every form and to control every aspect of life and rule the soul itself." Most thinking people in the United States agree with the President and Ambassador Hughes – and many among the down-trodden elsewhere do as well. But shouting U.S. opposition from the

rooftops does not constitute a strategic communications or public diplomacy campaign, and in the early going, Hughes has not had time to offer more.

This pillar, more than any other perhaps, will take the longest to effect change, since modifying behavior means modifying a belief structure and culture – even among the more moderates of the Muslim world. Many moderates in the Muslim world and elsewhere do not wish us harm, but neither do they buy into our culture completely. For example, some who clearly are not extremists still do not support equal rights and privileges for women. A potential ally against extremism, then, may not see the conflict between Muslim extremism and the West as a black and white issue. They must gradually be convinced over time why it is to their advantage to help us isolate the extremists, and the representatives of the United States simply stating that imperative will not make it so. It may be necessary to find key influential individuals and organizations within the targeted region that can help us understand their culture – and then in turn help to influence others within that culture over time. Such a process is central to the success of a strategic communications campaign.

3. We must work to foster a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people from different countries. "America is…confident of our ideals. We believe, given a fair hearing and a free choice, that people the world over will choose freedom over tyranny, tolerance over extremism, diversity over rigid conformity and justice over injustice…And so our mission is to create the climate and conditions that allow people to give us that fair hearing."[46] Ms. Hughes' thoughts are undoubtedly correct again. But the same thoughts, translated to another region and another culture, give rise to the delicateness of developing the components of that fair hearing. Even conceding the purest of motives, suggesting that others wish to be just like us is pure hubris. Many will risk life, limb, and freedom to come to the United States to be sure, and, when here, will more or less accept our values. Many more, however, perhaps better established in their own countries, certainly would like to experience freedom, tolerance, diversity, and justice – but on terms that make better sense to them for their own government and society.

Returning to Morocco for a moment as an example, many citizens there would embrace all of that openness. But for them, democracy may not mean an elected president. The king is revered there, but even more so is the throne – the *position* of king. Moroccans would very much like to have a more representative government – but with a king at the head. Rather than a pure constitutional monarchy, they want something perhaps in between an absolute monarchy and a representative democracy. They see several diverse nations within the territory of Morocco and other areas claimed by the country – the Berbers in the north, the Moroccan Arabs in the south, and the Sarharawi Arabs in the Western Sahara. In their minds, an elected leader could not be nearly as effective as would a king in governing these diverse elements – while maintaining the integrity of the country. Furthermore, many are willing to relinquish a certain amount of due process and freedom to ensure that the country is safe. And while religious tolerance exists in Morocco more than elsewhere in the Arab world, 99% of the country is Muslim. There is no driving force to promote minority religions – and proselytizing for those religions is illegal. Women certainly have privileges in Morocco that don't exist in many Arab and Muslim countries, but being the best in this category is still well below the norm for the United States and much of the rest of the world. All of which is to say, when constructing a strategic communications campaign for a country or region, it pays to know that area intimately – which in turn involves listening before talking. Tailored campaigns are called for – crafted by regional experts – as part of a national campaign.

Hughes' Four E's

Ambassador Hughes has a plan to communicate the three pillars of her strategic vision. And while her plan, at least in the early going, consists effectively of slogans, she has made an effort to lay out a blueprint on which to build. This blueprint is made up of her 4-E's: *engage, exchange, educate,* and *empower*.

1. Engage. "We cannot expect people to give a fair hearing to our ideas if we don't advocate for them. And research shows, when people know that America is partnering with their governments to improve their lives, it makes a difference in how they think of us. America must improve our rapid

response, and as Secretary Rice has said, we must do much more to confront hateful propaganda, dispel dangerous myths, and get out the truth."[47] Ambassador Hughes really has two distinct thoughts in that paragraph. The first is the case for pure diplomacy – bringing other countries along with us. Working with other governments, however, is more than delivering demarches stating our policies and what we expect. It involves listening to those governments, finding out what is important to them as well, where possible developing policies that benefit both sides – and, engaging in public diplomacy as well, so that the citizens see how we operate.

The second idea is more aggressive: a counter-propaganda campaign. This involves not letting harmful statements by others just fester without a response. Such a reactive posture is difficult. Much better to be *proactive* and get our story out first. Even better is a longer term campaign of confidence-building that eventually causes people elsewhere to believe us over others. We are a long way from that goal.

2. Exchanges. As mentioned earlier, Ambassador Hughes sees exchanges as the single most effective way to reach people with the American message. Rarely does an intelligent person come to the United States as part of an exchange program, in effect assuming the role of an American, and not come away profoundly changed. Many want to stay in the United States as a result, but many return to their countries with new ideas and values – and a fresh view of the United States. Frequently they in turn become the principal advocates for sending others back to the United States on exchanges. As part of the experience, people who have been to the United States on an exchange almost always become fluent in English, allowing them to read and hear first hand what Americans hear, rather than having it filtered through a foreign news or broadcast agency. Military exchanges frequently can be quite effective, since legitimate militaries share certain values at the outset. Foreign militaries universally respect their counterparts in the United States, and therefore the transition to U.S. values has a leg up. Medical exchanges are similar. But since 9/11, exchanges have become more difficult, not less so, simply because of the added scrutiny and suspicion attached to international visitors to the United States.

3. Education. Ambassador Hughes believes that educating Americans about other cultures will pay great dividends in the long run, particularly if such studies involve learning a foreign language. Making our citizens

"better citizens of the world" will lessen the perception that Americans are arrogant, and the learning of other languages will go a long way toward understanding other cultures while softening our image abroad. Hughes includes under this rubric an increased effort to provide English language training to people from other countries. This last is more difficult, because her own State Department makes it quite difficult for would-be immigrants to obtain a U.S. visa purely for language training. The department requires a more compelling reason for entering the country to obviate frivolous visa seekers – and English can almost always be learned in their own country.

4. Empowerment. "The most powerful and incredible voices may not always be our own government officials."[48] Ambassador Hughes has taken representative citizens with her on her trips and has found them quite good at reaching foreign nationals. Moreover, she would like to empower individuals to speak for the United States as citizen ambassadors whether traveling with U.S. officials or in their own capacity.

The Place of Declarative Policy in Strategic Communications. The United States has a *de facto* strategic communications campaign in place, one with which Ambassador Hughes and U.S. officials around the world must contend. The government of the United States declares its policies every day, and people listen. Every time we sign a treaty (or don't sign one), release a strategy or policy document, enter into a trade agreement, or produce any number of other official policy statements, we are sending a message or messages. Those messages are *always* out there for the press, foreign governments, and international organizations to mine – and will remain available even if a detailed strategic communications plan is developed. Therefore, any strategic communications campaign must take into account the declarative policy of the United States in formulating a message. Other people certainly are.[49]

IX. Progress at the Pentagon?

DoD May Not Be On the Same Track. The Pentagon has no Karen Hughes position. The Joint Staff has taken some initiative – particularly in the *National Military Strategy to Combat WMD.* But OSD has taken little if any action to organize itself around a strategic communications mission, and certainly has not taken the recommendations of the Defense Science Board. The DSB recommended that the Under Secretary of Defense was to have been the single point of contact within DoD for strategic communications – with various lower-ranking officials to be devoted almost entirely to the task. Nor has OSD implemented the recommendation that all military plans and operations have an adequately funded strategic communications component coordinated at the national level.

Furthermore, says former defense official Dr. Christopher Lamb, the ponderous Department of Defense simply isn't properly organized to have a single point of view on anything – particularly on combating WMD. While that mission is arguably the most important for the United States over the next ten years, there are at least 26 offices in OSD and the Joint Staff alone that have some responsibility for it, and all are competing for scarce funds. Fragmented support for combating WMD is the result, and applying a consistent strategic communications message across those competing interests verges on the unmanageable.[50]

Still, words are in place that seemingly say the correct thing. Aside from inserting strategic communications as a strategic enabler into the NMS to Combat WMD, the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP), which translates national security strategy into planning guidance for the military, mandates the following:

- Incorporate a proactive and continuous strategic communications process into every phase of planning.
- Develop and continuously update strategic communications themes, messages and actions (programs, products, and plans) for all Areas of Responsibility (AORs).
- Closely coordinate strategic themes, messages, and actions, along with their proposed metrics with the Joint Staff, Office of the

Secretary of Defense, and when designated, the lead federal agency.

As mentioned previously, the 2006 QDR has a small section on strategic communications as well, calling for "an emphasis on consistency, veracity and transparency both in words and deeds… To this end, the Department will work to integrate communications efforts horizontally across the enterprise to link information and communications issues with broader policies, plans, and actions."[51]

In addition, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has a Director of Communications, a member of the Senior Executive Service, who has assembled a senior Strategic Communications Working Group that meets periodically, with a working-level group meeting frequently. The senior group, according to the director, is useful in ensuring that members of the Joint Staff are in agreement on messages, but he, too, believes the national interagency process is not functional, providing little guidance to DoD.

U.S. Strategic Command Moves Out. The United States Strategic Command, a mentor for this project, has taken some positive steps with regards to strategic communications, having stood up a strategic communications division within the headquarters at Omaha, Nebraska, headed for the moment by a colonel. Furthermore, the command's Foreign Policy Advisor (formerly the position of Political Advisor or POLAD) is a public diplomacy expert from the State Department, and was a leading advocate for strategic communications, particularly public diplomacy, while at his parent organization. He carries that expertise and advocacy to USSTRATCOM.

The Strategic Communications Division is programmed to be subsumed into a new organization in 2006, headed by a member of the SES, sporting the grand designation of Global Integration Strategy Center (GISC). The new director will be dual-hatted as the GISC head and Director of Strategic Communications. This new organization will be in downtown Omaha, away from the USSTRATCOM headquarters at Offut Air Force Base. The Center will have a Washington liaison, and will provide independent thinking to the commander. Among its strategic communications functions are:[52]

- Conduct deliberate strategic communications planning for USSTRATCOM missions.

- Synchronize strategic communications for USSTRATCOM missions.
- Conduct cultural and situational analysis.
- Conduct strategic communications crisis action planning for trans-regional issues.
- Contribute to the development of strategic communications doctrine and training.
- Advocate for strategic communications as a capability.
- Conduct, collate, and make available strategic communications measures of effectiveness.

The immediate task of the current division is to partner with another combatant command to develop and execute a strategic communications campaign. This endeavor will involve developing a concept of operations, examining requirements and authorities, compile lessons learned, and to be as forward-leaning as possible in accomplishing these tasks. This brings us to the very real concern that USSTRATCOM is one step removed from the interagency process, and while attempting to develop a *strategic* communications campaign, it may not be in step with any truly national and strategic communications designs that may eventually be developed. Combatant commands are currently being tasked to include strategic communications in all of their planning, but those that are proceeding are doing so with quite limited guidance – either at the national level, or from within the Department of Defense.[53] The appointment of a single point of contact for DoD, the invigoration of the interagency process – with that person deeply involved, and the passing of first-hand information to the combatant commands, seems essential to make the plans of USSTRATCOM and other well-meaning commands effective.

If all goes according to plan at USSTRATCOM, the Global Integration Strategy Center will create a collaborative environment that will allow the combatant commands to gain access to information that they need to develop Theater Security Cooperation Plans, Operations Plans, and Intelligence Campaign Plans. Above all, the Center will ensure that strategic communications is inseparable from all missions performed or supported by USSTRATCOM.[54]

X. Final Recommendations

The project team believes that this project should be continued, and that an actual strategic communications campaign for combating weapons of mass destruction should be written, building on this first phase – which we saw as one of problem identification, gap analysis, and advocacy. The emphasis in coming months should be on the latter – advocacy, because the timing is propitious and there is near unanimity on the problem and steps that could lead to its resolution. Advocacy should focus on the six findings in Section II.

Strategic communications is an underused tool at the national level, and an unused tool with regards to weapons of mass destruction. The objective of this project is to keep the attention of senior leaders focused on the need to ensure that as strategic communications takes root, a crucial element must be a campaign to combat weapons of mass destruction.

To do that we recommend:

1. This report receive the widest dissemination possible. Original drafts will be forwarded to the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and to the United States Strategic Command. In addition, we suggest that the report be published as one of the USAF Counterproliferation Center's *Counterproliferation Papers* series, and that a condensed version be published in a journal apt to be read by senior leaders.
2. An advocacy briefing be produced and presented (if the audiences are receptive) in Calendar Year 2006 to:
    - The Defense Threat Reduction Agency
    - The United States Strategic Command
    - The Counterproliferation Program Review Committee
    - The office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs
3. A second phase of this project be funded and supported, in which an actual strategic communications campaign for combating weapons of mass destruction template would be developed. This

plan would serve to assist regional experts and commands in developing tailored plans based on in-depth knowledge of the region and culture. The template could serve also as a guide to other modules within a national strategic communications campaign writ large.

XI. Conclusion

The United States has not lost its way in the world, or anything close to it. As a force for good, it is still unequalled. While our stock in the Arab and overall Muslim world is in wholesale decline, some of that is a natural antipathy between our two cultures as outlined in Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*.[55] While we have many common interests with those in the Muslim world, we also are hindered by our alliances with regimes unpopular within that world. No doubt some of these difficulties are indeed linked to our other alliances and policies as well as cultural differences, but nevertheless, many of these problems with our friends and foes can be linked directly to our failure to explain ourselves well to the world. As two significant studies have shown, the United States has a significant amount of work to do to just bring our image back to neutral. And not until we reach that modest level will we be able to positively influence other world actors. We require a strategic communications campaign to do so, and there are signs that the Bush Administration has come to that same conclusion.

A key area ripe for influence around the world is the fight to counter weapons of mass destruction. We are engaged on many levels in preventing acquisition of WMD by international actors that should not have them. So, too, are we feverishly working to have in our arsenal the proper capabilities to counter these weapons if we are unable to prevent acquisition. But we are not developing a sufficient strategic communications component to combat WMD threats. As the United States belatedly pursues a strategic communications campaign to match its other security policies, a critical element of that campaign must be combating WMD threats, preventing the worst people from acquiring the worst weapons.

However, this strategic communications campaign for combating WMD is best aimed only indirectly at the worst people. We should influence our allies first, and then other rational international actors, to help us isolate rogue states, dry up supplier networks, and defeat terrorists. Preventing states from acquiring a WMD program is probably easier than convincing someone to roll back an already developed chemical, biological, nuclear, or radiological capability. Furthermore, any campaign

must focus also on preventing regional actors from using WMD in conflicts with their neighbors.

To do all of this will require to decision-makers to devote much more time and attention to strategic communications in combating WMD threats. It will also require resolve, reorganization, additional staff and money at the national level – starting with the White House. The appointment of Karen Hughes to a key post at the State Department is an excellent start, and shows at least a bit of that resolve. The community is newly energized by her appointment, and there is plenty of advice on how she should go about this new task. The Department of Defense should participate fully and be completely integrated into any strategic communications national campaign as that campaign develops.

Why does the United States do what it does? In the eyes of some the answer may appear to be, "Because no one can stop us." This may be an answer that satisfies a few in a world where might makes right, but it is insufficient if we wish to lead in the world community and remain secure with a combination of strength and friends. To be a force for good that is supported by others and admired around the world requires much more. We need a campaign – a coherent message – that explains the actions of the greatest democracy the world has ever known. To date, this is a message not yet sent.

Notes

1. *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communications*, Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Washington, DC, September 2004.

2. *National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Final Draft, Fall 2005.

3. National Security Council, the White House, December 2002.

4. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 17 September 2002.

5. *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, December 2002.

6. Dissuasion, Denial, Disarmament and arms control, Diplomatic pressure, Defusing, Deterring, Disabling or destroying, Defending. As quoted in *Future War and Counterproliferation*, Barry R. Schneider, Praeger, 1999.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. *The U.S. Air Force Transformation Flight Plan 2004*, HQUSAF/XPX, January 2005.

10. Draft National Military Strategy to Combat WMD, JCS/J5 2005.

11. Ibid.

12. Lewis A. Dunn, *Can Al Qaeda Be Deterred From Using Nuclear Weapons?* Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Occasional Paper 3, National Defense University Press, Washington, DC, July 2005.

13. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, Department of Defense, Washington, DC, 6 February 2006, 19. The other three are *defeating terrorist networks, defending the homeland in depth, and shaping the choices of countries at strategic crossroads*.

14. Ibid., 51.

15. Ibid., 35.

16. The two other strategic enablers are 'Detection/Intelligence" and 'Partnership Capacity'.

17. Ibid.

18. JCS J5 IO briefing, 18 October 2004.

19. Engagement can take on several forms. Examples are cultural, military, and educational exchange programs, speeches, personal meetings, and many others.

20. *Report of the DSB on Strategic Communications*.

21. Ibid.

22. *Changing Minds Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World*, The Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, Washington, October 2003.

23. Ibid.

24. *From Conflict to Cooperation: Writing a New Chapter in Arab-U.S. Relation*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2005.

25. Interview with Ambassador Edward Gabriel, Project Chair for *From Conflict to Cooperation*, 2 August 2005.

26. Leonard Marks, Charles Wick, Bruce Gelb, and Henry Catto, "America Needs a Voice Abroad," *The Washington Post*, Saturday, 26 February 2005, A19.

27. Ibid.

28. Report of DSB Task Force on Strategic Communication, 44.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Fulbright, Senator J. William, Essay "On the Arrogance of Power," 1966.

32. Chuck Lutes, *The Role of Dissuasion in Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, October 2004.

33. Ibid.

34. Mark Mazzetti and Borzou Daragahi, "U.S. Military Covertly Pays to Run Stories in Iraqi Press," *The Los Angeles Times*, 30 November 2005.

35. Josh White and Bradley Graham, "Military Says it Paid Papers for News," *The Washington Post,* 3 December 2005.

36. Jim Hoagland, "Bush's Bold Bet on India," *The Washington Post*, 24 July 2005.

37. Remarks by IAEA Director, Mohamed El Baradei, Carnegie Endowment Nonproliferation Conference, 7 November 2005.

38. Interview with Jeremy Curtin, Department of State, Office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, June 30, 2005.

39. Report of DSB Task Force on Strategic Communication.

40. *Changing Minds Winning Peace*...Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy.

41. Remarks by Karen Hughes to the 2005 Forum on the Future of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Washington, DC, 14 October 2005.

42. From an Afghan proverb, quoted by Karen Hughes during her confirmation hearing on 22 July 2005.

43. Hughes remarks, 14 October 2005.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Karen Hughes, Testimony at confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC, 22 July 2005.

48. Hughes remarks, 14 October 2005.

49. Informal comments of Dr. Paul Bernstein, Senior Vice President, SAIC, to the author, 26 September 2005.

50. Remarks by Dr. Christopher Lamb, Senior Research Fellow at NDU's Institute for National Strategic Studies, at USAF Counterproliferation Center Symposium, *an Underused Tool. Using Strategic Communications to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, September 23, 2005.

51. 2006 QDR, 92.

52. Briefing by Col Scott Lamb, USSTRATCOM, at USAF Counterproliferation Center Symposium, *an Underused Tool. Using Strategic Communications to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 23 September 2005.

53. Briefing by Mr. Dennis Scofield, USNORTHCOM, at USAF Counterproliferation Center Symposium, *an Underused Tool. Using Strategic Communications to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 23 September 2005.

54. Ibid.

55. Samuel P. Huntington, "*The Clash of Civilizations?"* The Council on Foreign Relations, 1993.

The Counterproliferation Papers, Future Warfare Series

Providing Research and Education on
WMD Threats and Responses for the US Air Force

USAF Counterproliferation Center
Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama