

OPENING STATEMENT
SENATOR RICHARD G. LUGAR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
HEARING ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY
FEBRUARY 26, 2004

Today, the Foreign Relations Committee will examine American public diplomacy and the development of free media in emerging democracies.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, we have examined more deeply the standing of our nation with people around the world. Americans are troubled by examples of virulent anti-American hatred in the Islamic world, and they are frustrated by public opinion in allied countries that seems increasingly ready to question American motives or blame American actions for a host of problems.

In an era when allied cooperation is essential in the war against terrorism, we cannot afford to shrug off negative public opinion overseas as uninformed or irrelevant. We must clearly and honestly explain the views of the United States, displaying the humanity and generosity of our people, underscoring issues of commonality, and expanding opportunities for interaction between Americans and foreign peoples. Even the most enlightened public diplomacy will require resources and hard work over a period of decades.

I am pleased to welcome a good friend of the Committee, Margaret Tutwiler, the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Secretary Tutwiler holds one of the most difficult jobs in the United States government. She is in charge of explaining and promoting American interests and policies around the world, and she oversees the State Department's efforts to foster greater understanding through educational and cultural exchanges. We are fortunate to have an official of her experience and gravity in this difficult role.

Secretary Tutwiler understands that our definition of diplomacy must be expanded. Diplomacy now includes the contentious public debate between democracies and dictatorships, as well as dialogue with populations that are skeptical of American power and the freedom that we represent. As I stated in a Committee hearing two weeks ago with Secretary Powell, boosting the effectiveness and frequency of our communications with foreign populations will require a sea change in the orientation of the State Department, particularly as it relates to training, language expertise, and avenues of professional advancement. We are cognizant that Secretary Tutwiler has only occupied her post for a few months. Therefore, we are asking her to focus most of her discussion on her plans for the near term.

Following Secretary Tutwiler, the Committee will hear from a distinguished panel of experts on the development of free media in the world – particularly in emerging democracies. Mr. Gene Mater (MAY-ter) is an advisor to the Freedom Forum. He served with American units after World War II that helped to reestablish a free press in Germany. Mr. Mater was a CBS news executive and helped run the late International Media Fund. Mr. Adam Clayton Powell III is a Professor of Journalism at the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California. He has had a long career in public television, and has promoted the development of free press in Africa and elsewhere. Mr. Powell is also an expert in new media technologies, including the Internet. Our final witness is

Mr. Kurt Wimmer, a media law specialist with the firm of Covington & Burling. He has extensive experience in the newly democratic nations of Central Europe, including the former Yugoslavia.

A fully successful U.S. foreign policy requires that we make progress in building democratic institutions internationally, especially free and open media. Societies that are built on the foundation of a free press are far less likely to abuse human rights or threaten American security. Democracies, however, may differ with American policies. That is their right in a free world.

The United States government, through various programs, has long been involved in training journalists around the world and in establishing newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations. These programs, however, are not centralized in one bureau or agency. Many are orphans to other assistance programs. They often are effective in training journalists, but they stop short of ensuring that the media in a developing country has the necessary legal protections, follows basic rules of fairness and equal access, and can sustain itself financially.

In addition, these existing U.S. media programs are not established in ways that leverage federal government spending with the assistance of America's vibrant media sector. There is a strong desire by our finest journalism schools, newspapers, broadcasters, and advertising enterprises to help build free press and open media in the world. We also need to engage all the new media, such as the Internet and wireless companies.

After a review of government programs regarding the development of a free press in the world, I have concluded that U.S. government initiatives do not go far enough to ensure that developing nations have a free, fair, legally protected, and financially self-sustaining press and media. In response, earlier this week I introduced the International Free Press and Open Media Act of 2004.

To better organize and focus these efforts, my legislation directs the Secretary of State to provide funding to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) for the work of a free press institute. For more than 20 years the NED has been leading American efforts to help build the required democratic institutions of a free society. The President's proposed 2005 budget doubles the funding for the work of the Endowment.

Having served on the board of the Endowment for a number of years, as have some of my Senate colleagues, I can attest that the independence of the NED is central to the success of its initiatives to help develop a free press in the world. This bill seeks to employ the uniquely independent organization of the NED to accomplish a mission that complements public diplomacy, but is separate from it. The U.S. government maintains important public diplomacy programs, where the goal is to communicate American views to the world. But developing a free press in emerging democracies goes beyond advocacy of American views. It requires us to have a tolerance for criticism, to take into account cultural differences, and to commit to long-term projects. The NED is well-suited to this mission.

By creating a free press institute within the NED, we would also provide private sector media companies with a means to contribute their expertise and resources to the construction of an international free press.

I thank our witnesses for joining this discussion, and I look forward to their insights on public diplomacy and the development of free and open media.

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