



CYBERNOTES

Public Diplomacy in the Spotlight

Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes' high-powered "listening tours" to the Middle East and Muslim Asia, including her gaffes on Saddam Hussein's gassing victims and other missteps, have received lively press attention worldwide. But getting "out there" with America's message speaks to only one aspect of Washington's much-studied public diplomacy crisis. Even more critical, perhaps, is to break through the structural and organizational problems that have kept PD on the sidelines ever since USIA was abolished and folded into the State Department in 1999.

Hughes addressed some of the underlying problems on Oct. 14, when she keynoted a forum on the future of public diplomacy, "America's Dialogue with the World," co-sponsored by The George Washington University's Public Diplomacy Institute, The Public Diplomacy Council and the American Academy of Diplomacy. There, in the second half of her talk, she shared "a few of the tactical specifics of what we're doing" with an audience of 300, mostly PD professionals. (The transcript on Amb. Hughes' remarks is available online at <http://www.state.gov/r/us/2005/55165.htm>.)

"First of all, we're bringing public diplomacy to the policy table and integrating it into every aspect of the State Department," Hughes stated, explaining that she or one of her senior staffers attends Secretary Rice's first meeting every morning and last meeting every night, and many in between.

In an unprecedented move, she has already created a deputy assistant secretary for public diplomacy position in each regional bureau, who reports both to Hughes and to the regional assistant secretary.

"We're also speaking at all the seminars for new ambassadors," states Hughes, "emphasizing that public diplomacy is now part of the job

description of every single ambassador and every single employee at the State Department." Further, Hughes plans to attend each of the chiefs-of-mission conferences, and has directed the ambassadors to bring their public affairs officers to these meetings.

In the discussion following her talk, Hughes spelled out yet another

Site of the Month: Audit of the Conventional Wisdom

In this age of relentless media hype and information overload, where there is a premium on byte-size packaging of ideas and events, no matter how complicated, the essay series launched by MIT's Center for International Studies in May offers welcome relief (www.mit.edu/cis/acw.html). The essays "audit" the conventional wisdoms that underlie U.S. foreign policy, putting them to the test of data and history and exploring their effects on American policy.

By "conventional wisdoms" CIS means the folk axioms, bromides, platitudes and generally superficial explanations that, once entrenched, go unchallenged. Whatever the source and whoever the supporters, when conventional wisdom in foreign policy is mistaken, it can be damaging to U.S. interests and to global peace and stability.

Take the case of the "free market" economic policies fostered globally by the United States. Though insisted upon by the U.S. and known, ironically, as the "Washington Consensus," many economists point out that "structural adjustment" and similar marketization schemes have failed time and again to alleviate the problems of low or no growth in developing countries.

So far, the series includes such provocative titles as "All Weapons of Mass Destruction Are Not Equal," "The United States as an Asian Power: Realism or Conceit?," "U.S. Military Power: Strong Enough to Deter All Challenges?" and "Iran: Rogue State?"

"By subjecting particularly well-accepted ideas to close scrutiny, we hope to start an argument, or to re-engage policy and opinion leaders, on topics that are too easily passing such scrutiny," states the MIT Center for International Studies. "We do so as academics, rather than as policy-makers, by accepting complexity, marshaling historical evidence, offering new or overlooked data, and providing fresh analysis."

CIS hopes this will lead to "something we can all agree on: better foreign policies that lead to a more peaceful and prosperous world." At least it can help to keep the debate honest.

— Susan Maitra, Senior Editor



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objective: that the Bureau of International Information Programs ought to become a technology hub, not only for the department, but for the U.S. government. “We’re going to make that one of IIP’s core missions, and we’re convening a private-sector advisory council where I’m reaching out to some of the best minds in the technology world to try to get them to help me,” says Hughes.

These measures and plans may be driving a healthy institutional shake-up at State, thanks to Karen Hughes’ close friendship with President Bush. But whether that political backing will translate into financial backing, enabling her to command the resources necessary to actually implement her ideas, remains to be seen.

As on previous occasions, Hughes reiterated her determination to step up exchange programs and institute a vigorous citizen ambassador program. Some “new money” has been diverted into both exchange and English-language training programs already, Hughes reports, and a “significant” increase is planned for Fiscal Year 2006: \$74 million.

But fully \$180 million of the \$430 million requested for educational and cultural exchange programs in FY 2006 is specifically earmarked for “Muslim Outreach” programs — despite the fact the America’s image is no less tarnished among non-Muslims. The \$74 million increase will only allow the mainline exchanges to continue at about 2005 levels, and there is no telling whether more will be cut in the post-Katrina budgetary universe.

— Susan Maitra, Senior Editor

New Report Finds Decline in Global Violence

The Human Security Report, a comprehensive study released by The Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia, has found surprising evidence of a decline in the number of wars, genocides and human-rights abuses over the past decade. Terrorism is an anomaly, being the only category in which armed conflict has risen. (The full report is available online at <http://www.humansecurityreport.info/>.)

The report credits three major political changes over the last 30 years for the decline in violence. First came the process of decolonization. Wars of national liberation accounted for 60 to 100 percent of the conflicts from the early 1950s to the 1980s, depending on the year. But since colonialism’s virtual demise, no such wars have occurred.

Second was the end of the Cold War, which has resulted in an end to the instigation of proxy wars in the Third World. During the Cold War period these accounted for approximately one-third of all conflicts.

The report pays special attention to the upsurge of international activism from the World Bank, donor states, a number of regional security organizations and NGOs. However, the United Nations is given most of the credit for its effectiveness in spearheading these international operations. This may be surprising in light of some of the U.N.’s recent and highly publicized failures, but the report maintains this is because success is never as widely reported. The report details a sixfold increase in U.N. pre-

ventive diplomacy initiatives and a fourfold increase in peacemaking efforts since 1990.

“The increase in preventive diplomacy helped prevent a number of latent conflicts from crossing the threshold into warfare, while the rise in peacemaking activities has been associated with a major rise in peace settlements,” the report concludes. Further resources on the subject are available at the Human Security Gateway (<http://www.humansecuritygateway.info/>), a research and information database affiliated with the Liu Institute. The site offers a treasure trove of electronic and bibliographic resources on human security, including access to maps.

The decreasing trend in armed conflict runs counter to common perceptions of an increasingly violent and chaotic world, though the researchers insist their positive findings are no grounds for complacency. The report is ultimately intended to help the international community learn the lessons of conflict prevention and conflict resolution, both when policies work and when they do not.

— Daniel Zussman,
Editorial Intern

Video Games: A Changing Medium

A new generation of nonconventional video game-makers is promoting world peace through a medium notorious for embracing violence. Those concerned about the effects of exposure to video-game violence on young people have reason to hope the newest line of constructive video games will produce a similar, yet

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Quality Hotel

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Those who argued at the time that the acceptance of democracy in Iraq would be easy, and who drew on our experience with Japan and Germany, were wrong. They were dead wrong.

— Richard Armitage,
former Deputy Secretary
of State, *The Diplomat*,
Oct.-Nov. 2005.

opposite outcome.

The United Nations' World Food Program has seen enormous success since the release this past spring of "Food Force" (downloadable for free at <http://www.food-force.com/index.php/game/downloads/>), an online game primarily targeted at children, in which players must fight hunger in conditions replicating modern-day humanitarian crises. In a sign of the game's popularity, Yahoo! had to step in as Web host when the original U.N. site was overwhelmed by users.

A team at Carnegie Mellon University has produced "PeaceMaker" (<http://www.etc.cmu.edu/projects/peacemaker/TheGame.htm>), a strategy game whose objective is to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. CMU designed it especially for Israeli, Palestinian and American youth in high school and college settings.

The Serious Games Summit, an annual conference dedicated to advancing this new market, offers a guide to upcoming conferences and an abundance of downloadable information sessions from previous keynote speakers on their Web site ([\[www.seriousgamessummit.com/home.html#\]\(http://www.seriousgamessummit.com/home.html#\)\). These efforts are evidence of a maturing video game industry whose constructive potential is just now being realized.](http://</p></div><div data-bbox=)

— Daniel Zussman,
Editorial Intern

Hurricane Season 2005: A Global Warming Link?

The destructive hurricane season of 2005 has added new urgency to the question of climate change, already contentious well before Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma struck the Gulf Coast and Florida within a two-month period this fall.

Ross Gelbspan, who believes global warming is a man-made phenomenon, is the author of *Boiling Point: How Politicians, Big Oil and Coal, Journalists and Activists Are Fueling the Climate Crisis — And What We Can Do to Avert Disaster* (2004). Gelbspan asserts that Katrina's "real name is global warming." However, such claims from him and other alarmists were met with skepticism in some quarters. But despite the apparent lack of consensus, this year's devastation has caused a growing number of people to grasp the seriousness of the debate.

The Web offers an array of perspectives on global warming, ranging from general background information to polemics on both sides. A good introduction is available at the Environmental Protection Agency's information page (<http://yosemite.epa.gov/oar/globalwarming.nsf/content/index.html>). This site presents a balanced view of the phenomenon, laying out the problems it poses across many categories, and its likely causes. It also offers extensive data and research material for download, giving the public sufficient knowledge to form its own opinion on the matter.



NASA's Earth Observatory Web site (<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Laboratory/PlanetEarthScience/GlobalWarming/GW.html>) provides background information on climate change, but it is better suited for the tech-savvy visitor. Here one can find writings as well as video clips on the different aspects of climate change, and an interactive map for obtaining information about a specific region.

Another valuable resource is the September issue of *Science* magazine, which offered a comprehensive collection of global-warming articles regarding Hurricane Katrina, and climate change more generally, available free to all visitors (<http://www.sciencemag.org/sciext/katrina/>). Overwhelmingly, its articles attribute deadlier hurricane seasons to man-made global warming.

In a timely study done at Georgia Institute of Technology's School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, researchers gathered hurricane data on the number, duration and intensity of hurricanes during the past 35 years. "What we found was rather astonishing," says Peter Webster, who took part in the project with Greg Holland,

Judith Curry and Hai-Ru Chang. "In the 1970s, there was an average of about 10 Category 4 and 5 hurricanes per year globally. Since 1990, the number of Category 4 and 5 hurricanes has almost doubled, averaging 18 per year globally." They conclude that the spike in Category 4 and 5 hurricanes is caused by a global rise in sea-surface temperatures, which intensifies the magnitude of hurricanes once they have formed. (The full report is available at <http://webster.eas.gatech.edu/Papers/Webster2005b.pdf>.)

However, these studies have come under attack from a number of critics, most notably Dr. Patrick Michaels of the University of Virginia, a longtime skeptic of global warming and the author of *Meltdown: The Predictable Distortion of Global Warming by Scientists, Politicians, and the Media* (2004). Michaels maintains that the latest claims of a link between increased hurricane activity and global warming are unfounded. "The conclusion many draw from papers such as these is that anthropogenic global warming from the burning of fossil fuels by humans is causing more lethal storms. A closer look, though, reveals

not human actions but rather natural cycles are the primary cause." (The article is available at <http://www.techcentralstation.com/091605F.html>.)

Others have gone further, criticizing not only the content of these studies, but the publications themselves. Dr. Benny Peiser, an authority on the effects of environmental change at Liverpool John Moores University, claims that *Science* magazine refused to publish his findings because it raised doubts over a link between global warming and human activity. Professor Roy Spencer, another prominent skeptic and an expert on satellite measurements of global temperatures at the University of Alabama, also accuses *Science* of bias. He claims that when his own team submitted findings casting doubt on the existence of global warming, they were rejected by reviewers from *Nature* and *Science* magazines (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/05/01/wg1ob01.xml&sSheet=/news/2005/05/01/ixworld.html>).

As the global-warming debate rages on, it remains uncertain which side will ultimately gain popular support. In light of recent events, the skeptics have hit back hard, while advocates of a link wonder what will convince doubters, if not this year's record-breaking hurricane season. In any case, the magnitude of destruction along the Gulf Coast has awakened many people to the gravity of the issue. As Sir John Lawton, chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, puts it: "If this makes the climate loonies in the States realize we've got a problem, some good will come out of a truly awful situation."

— Daniel Zussman,
Editorial Intern ■

50 Years Ago...

In this little world, we constitute perhaps the happiest family of any "hardship" post. It is hot here, and mail takes eight days to reach us, but we are working hard and having fun. By Christmas, those of us who do not yet have apartments will have them, and air-conditioned, too. We have a boat which takes us on picnics up the Mekong, and once a week we look at American movies on the roof of the embassy residence.

— Martin F. Herz, from Phnom Penh, in "News from the Field," *FSJ*, December 1955.

