



# CYBERNOTES

## AFSA's Dissent Awards Cited as Model in Kenya

"Time to Reward Constructive Disagreement" is the title of Kenyan columnist Laila Macharia's Dec. 17 offering in *Business Daily Africa*, the online version of the Nairobi-based *Business Daily* newspaper ([www.bdafrica.com](http://www.bdafrica.com)).

In a call for her government to institute an award for constructive dissent to complement the medals for patriotism traditionally awarded on Jamhuri Day, the anniversary of Kenya's establishment as a republic, Macharia cites the American Foreign Service Association — which recognizes "the officer whose actions best embody 'initiative, integrity, intellectual courage and constructive dissent.'"

"The point is to encourage members of the Foreign Service to challenge conventional wisdom," Macharia explains. "The idea is noble: a nation is better served when its constituents are encouraged to suggest improvements. But the best innovations may never see the light of day if we look askance at anyone who challenges the status quo."

"Despite the many liberation struggles we have been through, dissent is still frowned upon in Kenya," Macharia states, and proceeds to paint a devastating portrait of the culture of passivity and group-think. "We beg people to tell us what we think, to form our opinions for us, so that we don't have to

take the trouble. And if we feel threatened by the missive, we promptly shoot the messenger, muzzling them or accusing them of ulterior motives."

"We can't move forward if we're always running back to the warmth of the hearth, afraid to take any risk," she says. "So let's cultivate a culture that admires and defends those who tell the truth and ask the hard questions," she urges.

"At the community and company levels, an Award for Constructive Dis-

sent honors those who stand apart and lead from the front," Macharia concludes. "At the national level, it applauds those who love Kenya more than their own comfort. And who raise the alarm whenever they see millions of us headed resolutely toward the cliff's edge."

## Public Diplomacy and the Pentagon

Observations concerning what some have termed the "militarization"

### Site of the Month: [www.GreenOptions.com](http://www.GreenOptions.com)

*GreenOptions*, produced by the Green Options Media Network, is a rapidly expanding network of environmentally focused blogs. Founded in February 2007 by David Anderson of San Francisco, it has become a leader among "green" news and information sources aimed at general audiences ([www.greenoptions.com](http://www.greenoptions.com)).

Written by experienced professionals and topic experts, *GreenOptions'* individual blogs engage visitors with authoritative content, compelling discussions and actionable advice. Users new to the "green life" can contribute to the conversation by joining in dialogue between the writers and visitors on individual blogs.

The 15 blogs are presented in three different "channels" — News and Opinion, Family & Lifestyle, and Business and Technology. One of the News and Opinion blogs, for example, *EcoWorldly*, presents news and perspectives on the environmental movement from around the world. Its writers report on green developments, environmental news and hot environmental issues from six continents, covering stories that seldom make the headlines in the mainstream media outlets but can provide ideas, lessons and a broad spectrum of information for making sustainable choices in the U.S. In the Business and Technology channel, *The Inspired Economist* highlights the individuals and companies applying passion and innovation to economic, social and environmental challenges.

*GreenOptions* also offers green job listings, a free online newsletter, discussion forums and a directory of green blogs and Web sites.



of foreign policy typically focus on the Defense Department's greatly increased role in nationbuilding and related foreign assistance efforts during the Bush administration. Recent news items suggest that the Pentagon's monopolization of information operations — or public diplomacy, broadly speaking — may be just as striking.

In a talk at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in late October on "Building the Global Counterterrorism Network," Michael Vickers, assistant secretary of defense for special operations, low-intensity conflict and interdependent capabilities, discussed the Special Forces' information role in the fight against Islamist terrorists ([www.washingtoninstitute.org](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org)). "The themes you emphasize, how well they resonate, the distribution mechanisms, who's giving the message" are all important factors, he said, and a notice posted by the Special Operations Command shortly thereafter indicated that the Pentagon is fielding its own version of the now-defunct U.S. Information Agency to get the job done.

As Walter Pincus reports in the Dec. 1 *Washington Post*, the notice for contractors updates a proposal to develop and operate "influence Web sites" that would support combat commanders in the war on terrorism. The Web sites, in local languages, would "shape the global media landscape" using Internet technologies, including "slideshows, video content syndication or podcasts, blogs, streaming video/audio and advanced search."

Pincus quotes from the notice to the effect that a minimum of two and no more than 12 Web sites will be needed, and that their languages might include Arabic, French, Portuguese, Armenian, Azeri, Farsi, Georgian, Hin-

di, Punjabi, Tagalog, Urdu, Russian and Chinese, in addition to English and Spanish.

The purpose of the sites is to present "news, sports, entertainment, economics, politics, cultural reports, business and similar items of interest to targeted readers" following "guidance provided by the appropriate combat commander," according to the proposal. Under its Trans-Regional Web Initiative, the Pentagon has such sites in North Africa and Iraq already, says Pincus.

The Special Operations programs are just one part of the Pentagon's global information operations, the policy for which was updated in August 2006 by Defense Department Directive O3600.01 with the objective of making them a core military competency ([http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/info\\_ops.pdf](http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/info_ops.pdf)). The Special Operations and Combatant Commanders' programs are separate from but coherent with the Defense Department's Public Affairs operations, the Civil-Military Operations' information activities and, last and perhaps least, the Defense Support to (State-led) Public Diplomacy program.

### Crisis Erupts in Office of the Historian

The Office of the Historian was plunged into controversy in mid-December, when Professor William Roger Louis, chairman of the Historical Advisory Committee overseeing the office for the past five years, warned publicly that the future of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series, the official record of U.S. foreign policy mandated by Congress and produced by the Office of the Historian, is in jeopardy due to mismanagement of the office by the incumbent Historian, Dr. Marc Susser.

Underscoring his concerns, Louis announced his resignation from the committee.

Louis' views, presented in a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, were echoed by Prof. Thomas Schwartz, another prominent historian and a former member of the Advisory Committee.

Schwartz, a professor at Vanderbilt University, pointed to the "forced retirement" this past summer of Dr. Edward Keefer, the series' editor, stating it was "only the latest example of a management style that insisted on abject and subservient loyalty to Dr. Susser at the expense of competence and performance in the achievement of the goals of the office."

Schwartz's membership on the Advisory Committee had not been renewed, in defiance of tradition, after he spelled out criticisms in the committee's last annual report. Another committee member, Prof. Edward Rhodes of Princeton University, also tendered his resignation in a Dec. 2 letter to Secretary Rice.

At a Dec. 10 meeting to address the problem, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Sean McCormack denounced the criticism. Accusing committee members of engaging in innuendo and ad hominem attacks, he walked out of the meeting.

At issue, among other things, is the departure of a number of qualified staff from the office — 20 percent of the FRUS staff (and 30 percent of its staff experience in terms of years of employment), according to Louis. The need to hire a competent new general editor for the series and catch up with the mandated publication schedule is also at issue.

Prof. Louis urged Sec. Rice to mandate an independent review of the



If the prime minister of the Russian Federation is on television speaking about gas, it means gas is not an economic issue to them but a political issue.

— Bodhan Sokolovsky, aide to Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, Jan. 5, [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

leadership and management of the Historian's Office and to put a hold on all major actions of the Office pending the outcome.

According to a report on the fracas in the Jan. 12 *New Yorker* magazine, a concerned Sec. Rice herself met with the committee and subsequently appointed a review panel to look into the matter ([www.newyorker.com](http://www.newyorker.com)).

Readers can pursue this unfolding story online at [www.fas.org/blog/security/2008/12/crisis\\_in\\_frus.html](http://www.fas.org/blog/security/2008/12/crisis_in_frus.html), where you will find links to most of the relevant documents.

### Foggy Bottom Twitters, Networks, and Taps Online Youth Groups

"One clear lesson from the Cold War was that winning hearts and minds required communicating in a way that 'connected' with people on their terms, whether through film or jazz or jeans," wrote Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Colleen P. Graffy in the Dec. 24 *Washington Post* ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)). To keep our public diplomacy relevant today, she continued, we have to reach out and connect with people on their terms, whether we use blogs, texts — or tweets.

Graffy's report on her use of tweets during a December PD trip through Eastern Europe, along with several related news items, indicates that the State Department's effort to adapt to the digital age continues to gather momentum.

Tweets, as Graffy explains, are the lingua franca of Twitter, a social networking tool in which you send a text message of 140 characters or fewer in response to the question: What are you doing?

Graffy linked her messages to video and photos, combining the personal (a reference to plunging into Iceland's Blue Lagoon) and the professional (interviews with Pro TV in Moldova and A1+ in Armenia to show U.S. support for free and independent media).

"Communicating in this peppy, informal medium helped personalize my visit and enhance my impact as a U.S. official," she said. Students at the University of Bucharest and, later, Moldovan bloggers knew her before she arrived. Said one Romanian student: "We feel like we already know you — you are not some intimidating government official. We feel comfortable talking with you."

Graffy points to State's introduction of "Public Diplomacy 2.0," social networking for State alumni and enhanced Web sites, blogs and Facebook pages for embassies. The department's blog, Dipnote, features musings from top officials on policies and programs.

On Dec. 1, the department officially unveiled a social networking site to promote international exchanges and enhance the U.S. image abroad, particularly among young people. *ExchangesConnect* is administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs ([www.govexec.com](http://www.govexec.com)). The new-

ly designed Web site, [www.exchanges.state.gov](http://www.exchanges.state.gov), is a portal to the social network and the agency's Facebook page.

The site's launch was accompanied by the announcement of a video contest aimed at boosting public diplomacy and sponsored by the Adobe Foundation. The theme for the three-minute video is "My Culture + Your Culture = Share Your Story." The bureau also plans to develop a program to offer free online English training and is seeking a private-sector partner to create the necessary technology.

In a potentially even more far-reaching initiative, the State Department has teamed with Facebook, Google, MTV, Howcast and others to organize an "Alliance of Youth Movements," with an online presence to inspire and assist youth groups around the world to combat political oppression and extremism.

The initiative, led by Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy James Glassman and Policy Planning staff member Jared Cohen, was inspired by an online campaign against terrorist guerrilla groups in Colombia: *Million Voices Against the FARC*, created by Oscar Morales, a 33-year-old unemployed computer technician ([www.facebook.com/pages/One-million-voices-against-FARC/10780185890](http://www.facebook.com/pages/One-million-voices-against-FARC/10780185890)).

"The idea is to put all these people together, share best practices and produce a manual that will be accessible online and in print to any group that wants to build a youth empowerment organization to push back against violence and oppression around the world," Glassman said.

Some 17 groups from South Africa, Britain and the Middle East that already have an online presence, as well



## 50 Years Ago...

Americans are beginning to wake up to our dangerous language lag — a weak chink in the nation's armor. As a leader in the Free World, the United States cannot afford to continue to be tongue-tied in the world arena.



— From "Foreign Language: Chink in America's Armor?"  
by Jacob Ornstein, *FSJ*, February 1959.

as observers from seven organizations that do not, were in attendance at Columbia University Law School in New York City for the movement's launch in early December. Featuring Whoopi Goldberg, Facebook founder Dustin Moskowitz and Oscar Morales, among other speakers, the conference was streamed by Howcast (<http://info.howcast.com/youthmovements/su mmit>).

For more information, go to [www.state.gov/r/us/2008/112310.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/us/2008/112310.htm) for the transcript of the Nov. 24 briefing at the department, where Glassman and Cohen discuss the initiative in detail.

## Another "First"

In celebrating the historic election of the first African-American president of the United States, another historic "first" has been neglected. Barack Obama is the first modern American president to have spent some of his formative years outside the United States. He is a Third Culture Kid, as Ruth van Reken, one of the foremost authorities on this phenomenon, points out in the Nov. 26 *Daily Beast* blog ([www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2008-11-26/obamas-third-culture-team](http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2008-11-26/obamas-third-culture-team)) — and this may exert a significant influence on his administration.

Obama is a TCK himself, and they

proliferate among his top appointees. For example, White House adviser Valerie Jarrett was a child in Tehran and London; Treasury Secretary-designate Tim Geithner grew up in East Africa, India, Thailand, China and Japan as the son of a Ford Foundation executive; and National Security Adviser-designate James L. Jones was raised in Paris.

Not merely trivia, this could have a lot to do with the practice of the new administration, says van Reken. Children who spend a portion of their developmental years outside their "passport country" — and the adults they become — share a global perspective, social adaptability and intellectual flexibility. They tend to be quick to think outside the box and can appreciate and reconcile different points of view, according to the body of sociology and other literature on individuals raised globally. Beyond whatever diversity in background or appearance they may bring to the party, there is a diversity of thought among them as well.

In 1984, Dr. Ted Ward, then a sociologist at Michigan State University, hailed TCKs as "the prototype citizens of the future." The future is now! ■

*This edition of Cybernotes was compiled by Senior Editor Susan Brady Maitra.*

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