



CYBERNOTES

“Missed Story in Iraq”: We Have It!

The *Columbia Journalism Review*'s July-August editorial (www.cjr.org) notes that “Every March since the war in Iraq began, the *Foreign Service Journal* ... has examined the state of diplomacy and nationbuilding in Iraq. Reading those issues, one thing is apparent: the press has largely ignored an important story about the consequences for thousands of civilian Foreign Service employees of the administration's disastrous war.”

The *CJR* editorial continues: “The maintenance of America's largest embassy in an active war zone is a hard case to make. (Even in Vietnam security was never so bad that it prevented diplomats from doing their jobs.) Diplomats in Iraq — in the besieged International Zone in Baghdad and out in the perilous Provincial Reconstruction Teams around the country — operate under frequent mortar and rocket attack, or surrounded by armed guards when they dare venture beyond the wire to meet with wary Iraqis. In the PRTs, they are often forced to do without basic resources, like working phones. To date, three Foreign Service workers have been killed.

“The press, meanwhile, has been more interested in the Pentagon's effort to blame the State Department for the bungled nationbuilding effort — that somehow the lack of civil engineers, electricity-grid experts, and other specialists is due to State's failure to, as President Bush said, ‘step up.’ But this is not what diplomats do. They talk to people, negotiate, build

The fact of the matter is this Foreign Service of ours needs more dissenters, not fewer. And it needs to encourage them, not discourage them. If there were more of that, maybe we wouldn't be in the mess we're in right now.

— Former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, June 28, speaking at the AFSA Awards Ceremony, <http://www.npr.org>

relationships, and the like.

“Here are two basic questions that reporters need to unpack: Is it possible to perform effective diplomacy under such circumstances? And if not, then why is our government risking so many lives this way?”

— Susan Maitra, *Senior Editor*

Senate Hearing Throws Spotlight on Foreign Assistance Reform

“I believe this new foreign assistance process is seriously flawed and may be in serious trouble,” said Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., in his opening statement at a June 12 hearing to assess the Bush administration's 18-month-old initiative to reform the U.S. foreign assistance process (<http://foreign.senate.gov/hearings/2007/hrg070612p.html>).

Menendez, chairman of the Senate

Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Development and Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs and International Environmental Protection that sponsored the hearing, charged that the process so far had been carried out in a secretive manner, excluding valuable input from the field. As a result, USAID is being decimated and the development agenda shortchanged in the service of short-term foreign policy goals. Menendez made it clear that he expects the administration to collaborate with Congress and demonstrate transparency in the process from here on out.

Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., ranking minority member of the Foreign Relations Committee, announced that, in view of the importance of the issue, the Republican committee staff are now carrying out a field-based study, examining assistance funded by the full range of government agencies in more than 20 countries. They are paying particular attention to the new coordination process to see whether and how it is mirrored in the field.

Acting USAID Administrator and Director of Foreign Assistance Henrietta Fore, the principal government witness, heard a good deal of blunt talk at the hearing. Besides remarks from Sens. Menendez and Lugar, three development experts testified.

Brookings Institute Fellow Lael Brainard cited the administration's Fiscal Year 2008 budget request to reduce the Development Assistance account by \$468 million, while correspondingly increasing the Economic Support Funds account by \$703 mil-



CYBERNOTES

lion, to underscore concerns that long-term development programs were being sacrificed to short-term exigencies. Further, he argued, the reform has so far left the tangled confusion of foreign assistance legislation, objectives and agencies largely untouched.

Another witness, Steven Radelet of the Center for Global Development, pointed out that the new director of foreign assistance manages barely half of the assistance budget (55 percent), with DOD controlling 19 percent and other agencies the remaining 26 percent. Radelet argued the administration has failed to take advantage of the opportunities to tackle the broader challenges of restructuring and strengthening foreign assistance.

A number of proposals to get the reform process back on track were fielded, including establishment of a Cabinet-level position to head U.S.

development programs.

— Susan Maitra, *Senior Editor*

New Seven Wonders

The list of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World (the Great Pyramid of Giza, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, the Statue of Zeus at Olympia, the Mausoleum of Mausollos at Halicarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes and the Lighthouse of Alexandria) has been around for more than two millennia.

On 7/7/07, appropriately enough, a new list of seven wonders was announced. The new wonders were chosen in a thoroughly modern fashion: Internet voting and cell-phone text messaging. In no particular order, the new wonders are: The Great Wall of China; the ancient city of Petra, in Jordan; the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Machu

Picchu, in Peru; Chichén Itzá, in Mexico; the Roman Colosseum; and the Taj Mahal. The Great Wall, begun in about the 3rd century B.C., is the oldest of the wonders (the founding date for Petra is unclear). The newest is the Christ the Redeemer statue, erected in 1931.

The New Seven Wonders project was launched by a private foundation in 1999. Any monument in an “acceptable” state of preservation and built before 2000 was eligible for consideration. By 2005, 177 had been nominated. After a panel of experts narrowed the list to 20 sites, voting was opened to the general public on the Internet. More than 100 million votes were cast, but the voting process has been criticized because it was possible to vote more than once.

For more information visit <http://www.new7wonders.com>. (Nominations are now being accepted for the New Seven Wonders of Nature.)

— Anna Wong Gleysteen,
Editorial Intern

On Again, Off Again: China and the Internet

While it is always a good idea to be careful when sending an e-mail or posting on the Internet, Americans do not have to worry that their words may get them sentenced to a labor camp. In the PRC, this is a very real concern.

In April, the wife of a Chinese blogger made headlines when she sued Yahoo, alleging that the company abetted the torture of pro-democracy writers by releasing their private data to the Chinese government. The blogger, Wang Xiaoning, was sen-

50 Years Ago...

[The *FSJ*] should give free expression to the hopes and fears, the aspirations and the constructive criticism, of the entire Foreign Service in order that this body of professional specialists in foreign affairs may build a better Service, united behind the foreign policies of the United States. ... This does not mean that the *Journal* should become a forum of opposition. ... However, there is no organ of the Foreign Service at the present time other than the *Journal* which can ventilate honestly-felt differences of opinion on matters of professional interest.



— Editorial by Robert McClintock, chairman of the Editorial Board, *FSJ*, September 1957.

MARKETPLACE

Click on the
Marketplace tab at
www.fsjournal.org

AFSPA
www.afspa.org

American Military University
www.amuonline.com

Clements International
www.clements.com

Cort Furniture
www.cort1.com

Diplomatic Automobile
www.diplosales.com

Georgetown Suites
www.georgetownSuites.com

Hirshorn Company, The
www.hirshorn.com

Jannette Embassy Plan, The
www.jannetteintl.com

Korman Communities
www.kormancommunities.com

Middle East Institute, The
www.mideasti.org

Oakwood Corporate Housing
www.oakwood.com

Prudential Carruthers
www.prudentialcarruthers.com

Re/Max - Piekney
www.movetonorthernvirginia.com

Remington Hotel, The
www.remington-dc.com

State Department FCU
www.sdfcu.org

WJD Management
www.wjdpdm.com

University of Kentucky
www.pattersonschool.uky.edu

When contacting an advertiser,
kindly mention the FSJ.

CYBERNOTES

tenced in 2003 to 10 years in a labor camp for having “incited subversion with online treatises” critical of the government. The lawsuit, filed in the U.S., claims that Yahoo turned over data on as many as 60 other people.

Yahoo says it condemns the suppression of free speech, but must comply with local laws. The company notes that as governments are not required to say why they want certain information, it has no way of knowing how the responses will be used.

Although the PRC deals swiftly and harshly with people it views as disrupting what it calls the “healthy and orderly” online world, overall censorship of the Web in China is uneven. The strength of censorship seems to wax and wane as the government struggles to balance economic interests and political control. This was illustrated in May when it withdrew a measure requiring all bloggers to register with their real names. (It was made optional after Internet companies pointed out the logistical nightmare of cross-checking people’s names with the Public Security Bureau. According to the official Xinhua news service, China has more than 20 million bloggers.)

PRC officials are well aware of the economic potential of the Web, which has helped spark healthy domestic online gaming and software industries, among others. In 2000, the volume of e-commerce within China was already estimated at \$9.3 billion, and information and communication technology is the fastest-growing sector in its economy.

There are approximately 137 million Internet users in China out of a population of 1.3 billion, or about 10.5 percent. The Internet penetration rate varies greatly by region, however: in large cities 25 percent or more of residents may be online, while in the

countryside that number drops to less than 10 percent. Experts estimate that for at least 30 percent of Internet users their main access point is a wangba — literally “Web bar” — which usually charges about 5 renminbi, or less than 75 cents, for an hour’s worth of high-speed Internet access. In 2000 there were only 16 computers per 1,000 people in China, compared to nearly 600 in the U.S. Nearly 60 percent of Internet users there are men, and 35 percent of users are 18 to 24 years old.

Known officially as the “Golden Shield Project,” China’s Internet security project is often referred to in the West as “The Great Firewall of China.” It is relatively uncoordinated (sites may be accessible in one city but blocked in another, for example), and many government regulations about the Web are routinely ignored by Internet users and not enforced by security officials. According to a 2003 Harvard study, the list of blocked Web sites is not static, but at any given time as many as 50,000 sites may be inaccessible. Many different methods are employed, especially IP blocking (denying access to the exact string of numbers that identifies a computer or server on the Internet).

E-mails may also be censored. Volunteers patrol chat rooms and message boards, deleting “objectionable” text and reporting users. People are encouraged to report gaps they find in the firewall.

In addition, Chinese tend to practice a form of self-censorship, refraining from airing controversial views or visiting Web sites on sensitive subjects. Surveys show that relatively few users try to access proxy servers (which bounce the request for a blocked site through multiple servers in other countries), and the most-visited sites are nearly all gaming sites.



**Site of the Month:
www.fedstats.gov**

Want to know the average price of electricity in the U.S.? How many metric tons of carbon dioxide the U.S. released in 2005? Or maybe you're curious about the number of birds that have been banded in North America, or the daily snow depth in Wyoming. The answers to all these questions — and many, many more — can be found on *FedStats*, a Web site that helps people access the full range of statistical data compiled by the federal government. More than 100 agencies are linked on the site, which is maintained by the federal government.

Links to the relevant agencies' Web pages are arranged by program and subject area as well as by topic, so visitors don't need to know in advance which agency provides the data they are looking for. *FedStats*, now in its tenth year, also has a comprehensive search feature that draws on the databases of many U.S. agencies.

— Anna Wong Gleysteen, Editorial Intern

Cybercafés are supposed to require a photo ID for computer use and monitor users in real time to shut down computers being used to view inappropriate sites. After demonstrations or other disturbances the police will often raid local establishments. Internet service providers are similarly required to keep records of who is online when, and where they visited.

Unlike many other countries that limit Web access, censorship of the Internet in the PRC is mostly limited to political subjects. Searching the Chinese versions of Google or Yahoo, for example, does not bring up anything about the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, the Falun Gong or other subjects the PRC has deemed harmful to its "harmonious society."

The PRC also tries to limit access to foreign news and information. The English version of Wikipedia was blocked for a year, and the Chinese-language Wikipedia is still banned. The BBC Web site has been inaccessible for several years, and during times of crisis the government has been known to temporarily block

access to the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

Both Google and Yahoo have been criticized in the U.S. for profiting from censorship that includes restrictions on freedom of speech and press; Reporters Without Borders, which calls China the "world's biggest prison for cyber-dissidents," argues that if companies stopped aiding the PRC's censorship efforts, the government would be forced to change.

President Hu Jintao recently declared that the modernization of China's political structure must not jeopardize the one-party system. The government clearly views Internet censorship as critical to ensuring its continued reign. But given the inherent openness of the Web, this may be difficult to maintain in the long run.

Useful sources on Internet censorship include the OpenNet Initiative (<http://opennet.net>), Amnesty International's campaign (<http://Irrepressible.info>) and the Electronic Frontier Foundation's reports (<http://www.eff.org>). ■

— Anna Wong Gleysteen,
Editorial Intern

FSJ FasTrax

**Questions?
Not sure who to contact?**

FasTrax is your inside source to the right places.

MEMBERSHIP

For changes of address and other questions about AFSA membership, e-mail member@afsa.org.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Printed letters may be edited for space. E-mail to fsjedit@fsj.org, or mail to FSJ, 2101 E Street NW, Washington DC 20037.

ADVERTISING

For details about placing either a display or classified ad, e-mail fsjads@fsj.org.

COPYRIGHTS & REPRINTS

To obtain permission to reproduce FSJ material, e-mail fsjedit@fsj.org.



ONLINE

American Foreign Service Association
www.afsa.org

Foreign Service Journal
www.fsjournal.org

FSJ is audited by Business of Providing Audits, which has the largest membership of any media-auditing organization in the world.

