



## **State's Hughes Outlines Public Diplomacy Vision**

### **Under secretary explains strategic pillars to women's foreign policy group**

By Michael Jay Friedman

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Washington -- Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes expressed confidence November 4 that the ideals of freedom would prevail over extremists bent on cloaking the murder of innocents with the mantle of religion. Hughes addressed a luncheon honoring the 10th anniversary of the Washington-based Women's Foreign Policy Group (WFPG), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes global engagement and the leadership, visibility and participation of women in international affairs.

The under secretary described a three-point strategic vision for prevailing in the conflict. First is the communication of a "positive vision of hope rooted in our belief in freedom and opportunity for all."

Citing Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's "very significant" June 20 address at American University, Cairo, Hughes asserted that never before have democracy and human rights been as central to U.S. diplomacy. (See [related article](#).)

Acknowledging that the pace of change differs in each nation, the under secretary nevertheless discerned "fresh winds of reform and change" in nations as diverse as Morocco, Kuwait, Ukraine and Georgia, as well as Iraq, where citizens defied terrorist threats to cast their ballots in free elections.

"People everywhere want to be heard," said Hughes. "They want to have their opinions count. They want to participate in their society. They want to live in freedom."

The second facet of U.S. public diplomacy, said Hughes, is an effort to isolate and marginalize the extremists by exposing their efforts "to appropriate religion in the name of their violent agenda." Noting that terrorists and insurgents in Iraq indiscriminately kill their fellow Muslims, Hughes declared that the murder of innocents never is justified.

The third strategic pillar, the under secretary said, is to foster "a sense of common interest and common purpose between Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths throughout the world."

People the world over, she asserted, want a quality education, economic opportunity and a better life for their children.

Creating such a sense of common interests and value, Hughes said, requires a humble approach. Public diplomacy therefore must be as much about listening, she said, as speaking.

As part of listening to voices in other societies, Hughes has directed U.S. embassies to set up meetings with citizens of other nations, young people especially. She said that what is heard will "help inform both our policy and the way we communicate our policy."

The United States' mission, Hughes said, is to create a climate in which the peoples of the world could give competing ideas a fair hearing and make a free choice. She expressed confidence they would choose freedom over tyranny, tolerance over extremism, diversity over rigid conformity and justice over injustice.

Hughes pledged to seek such a climate through what she called the "four E's": engage, exchange, educate and empower.

Engage, she said, calls for public diplomacy to advocate American ideas of freedom, and swift responses to disinformation in an age of Internet, satellite television and instant communication.

Exchange, the under secretary said, involves the international exchange programs that are the United States' most successful public diplomacy tools. She promised to encourage more Americans to study and travel abroad and also to bring more people to the United States, where they can see a "generous and hard-working people who value family and faith."

Education, said Hughes, is the path to upward mobility for boys and girls the world over. She challenged Americans to become "better citizens of the world," not least by mastering more languages as a tool to learn more about other countries and cultures. She praised Secretary Rice's work toward formulating a strategic languages initiative to encourage American youth in this direction.

Empowerment, Hughes told her predominantly female audience, is of particular importance to women in the Arab world, whom a recent United Nations report depicted as "severely marginalized." Societies that neglect the capabilities of their female population, the report said, cripple half their potential.

Hughes explained how empowering citizen ambassadors has proven particularly important in cases where the voices of American officials might not be effective and offered examples from her recent travels. She pledged to create a robust citizen ambassador program that will allow individual Americans to "share their unique stories and skills," and to help partner American women with women around the world.

President Bush, Hughes related, has expressed his belief that women will prove a great force for change in the Middle East.

Hughes promised to continue to build the "shared connections" that bring together people who want to live in peace and freedom.

[Additional information](#) is available on the Web site of the Women's Foreign Policy Group