



U.S. ADVISORY COMMISSION ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY
Minutes and Transcript from the Quarterly Public Meeting on the
2015 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and
International Broadcasting

Tuesday, September 22, 2015 | 10:00-11:30a.m.
Senate Hart Office Building, Washington, D.C.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. William J. Hybl, Chairman
Mr. Sim Farar, Vice Chairman
Ambassador Penne Peacock, Member
Ms. Anne Terman Wedner, Member

COMMISSION STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ms. Michelle Bowen, Program Support Assistant
Dr. Katherine Brown, Executive Director
Ms. Jasmine El Gamal, Senior Research Fellow
Mr. Chris Hensman, Senior Advisor

MINUTES:

The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy met in an open session from 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, September 22, 2015, to present findings from its second-ever Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting, which is mandated by Congress to itemize all activities worldwide. The 2015 report focused mainly on Fiscal Year 2014 actual budget data.

The Commission’s Executive Director, Katherine Brown, first outlined the topline findings of the report based on \$1.8 billion of budget information from the State Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors. This included the top 10-funded Public Affairs Sections in U.S. embassies, educational and cultural programs, and BBG language services. The details are listed in the transcript below in addition to the executive summary of the entire report, which can be accessed at <http://www.state.gov/pdcommission>. Senior Advisor Chris Hensman, discussed the analysis the Commission completed on current PD efforts to counter negative Russian influence, and Senior Research Fellow Jasmine El Gamal also discussed her findings on PD’s role in countering violent extremism. Commissioners Penne Peacock and Anne Wedner also presented their findings and recommendations for the President’s Young Leaders Initiatives in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Western Hemisphere. Last, Brown quickly summarized the findings from the Commission’s priority projects for 2015 – improving research and evaluation programs, strengthening PD personnel, and keeping American Spaces open and accessible – in addition to report’s 38 recommendations.

Chairman Bill Hybl closed the meeting briefly discussing the Commission’s ongoing congressional mandate. The Commission will meet publicly again on December 2, 2015 to discuss the Broadcasting Board of Governor’s new strategic direction under its new CEO and Director, John Lansing.

TRANSCRIPT:

William J. Hybl: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the official public meeting of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. We're proud today to present the 2015 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting. Vice Chair Sim Farar is here from Los Angeles, Ambassador Penne Peacock from Austin, Texas and Anne Terman Wedner from Chicago, Illinois. Unfortunately, two of our members, Lezlee Westine from Virginia and Ambassador Lyndon Olson from Waco, Texas, are unable to join us.

Since 1948, the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy has been charged with appraising U.S. government activities intended to understand, inform and influence foreign publics. It works to increase our understanding of these activities. But, the Commission also conducts research. You'll see some of that today with our 2015 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy.

How many of you read last year's report? Great. I hope that was helpful. Having reviewed the 2015 report, the staff has clearly done a terrific job of making it comprehensive. It's about 100 pages longer and really gives you a feeling and flavor to what the current public diplomacy efforts are.

Our Executive Director, Katherine Brown, will soon report on the roughly \$1.8 billion budget in public diplomacy and international broadcasting activities that have gone on at the State Department and also the BBG. The analysis this year also talks about priorities in various areas, such as countering negative Russian influence in Europe. Some of the activities that occurred over the past year will also be addressed as most of the data is based on Fiscal Year 2014.

After Katherine, we'll hear from Jasmine El Gamal, our Senior Research Fellow, who's on loan to us from the Office of the Secretary of Defense in the Department of Defense. She's going to speak about some of the findings in public diplomacy's role in countering violent extremism. We'll also hear from our Senior Advisor, Chris Hensman. Chris, along with Katherine and the staff, just did a terrific job this year. After that, Commission Member Anne Wedner and Penne Peacock will talk about the Young African Leaders Initiative, which also includes the Mandela Fellowship that brings 500 or so young leaders from the continent of Africa to the United States. We had a great presentation on YALI in March 2014. Katherine's going to talk briefly about the Commission's priority issues, and then we'll have the Commission staff present the findings from the new report.

I'd now like to call on Vice Chair Sim Farr, to acknowledge the many contributors to this year's report. Sim?

Sim Farar: Thank you, Bill. I know many of you here. My name is Sim Farar. I'm Vice Chairman of the United States Advisory Commission Public Diplomacy. A report this size requires many contributors. It's very, very detailed. It's very, very strong and many people did a wonderful job. There's many contributors involved. Before we go into its findings, we want to take a minute to thank some of the people, the contributors to this report, some of whom are in the room.

First, we're thankful for the help from Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Rick Stengel, and his Policy Planning and Resources Office leadership, who helped us access this vital information. The leadership includes, but not limited to Susan Stevenson, Roxanne Cabral, John McIntyre, Patricia Kabra and Rodney Reynolds. We also want to thank the leadership of the various other diplomacy bureaus. Evan Ryan, Kelly Keiderling, Rick Ruth and the team at the

Education and Culture Affairs Bureau. Macon Phillips, Jean Manes and others in the International Information Program Bureau, including Jason Rebholz, who I think is here today. Doug Frantz, Valerie Fowler and their Public Affairs Bureau Bureau team. And, Rashad Hussein, Daniel Kimmage and their colleagues in the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism and Communication.

We also appreciate the help from the many deputy assistant secretaries and directors of public diplomacy in the six regional bureaus of the State Department who reviewed the foreign policy and public diplomacy goals in those regions with us, while checking through the report's data. There are too many to name today, but you can read about them in the acknowledgement section of this report.

At the Broadcasting Board of Governors, BBG, we're very appreciate of Rob Bole, Suzie Carrol, Bruce Sherman, and Sonja Gloeckle for compiling data on the BBG services. We're also thankful for the help from the surrogates. leadership. At Radio Free Asia, thank you to Libby Liu; at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, thank you to Martin Zvaners; at Middle East Broadcast Network, thank you to Deidre Kline; and at the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, thank you to Irvin Rubenstein. And at the Voice of America, thank you to Kelu Chao, Kristi Hayes and Scott Sterns.

ACPD had a small team to support this report's completion. Thank you very much to Jasmine El Gamal over here, you'll hear from very soon, and our seasonal analysts, Hallie Gardner and Palak Bhandari, who were instrumental to compiling and sorting copious amounts of data in this report.

And, we're also very grateful to our own—where's she at, is she here somewhere? Michelle Bowen, are you around? Oh, okay. She's our Program Support Assistant. She keeps the train rolling and keeps us moving around and keeps the office running very smoothly. Michelle, thank you for all you do. And now, I'll turn this over to Katherine Brown, who will introduce the key findings for the report.

Katherine Brown: Thank you, Sim, and thank you everyone for coming. I know it's a challenging day to be here. We really appreciate it. As Sim said, this report is an enormous undertaking. It requires a lot of support, and we are grateful to everyone who supported it. And we really want to emphasize that this report is only completed because of the support that we received from leadership of the State Department and Broadcasting Board of Governors. The acknowledgement section is about two pages long. So, you can read more about it in the report. But, I also wanted to thank Dan McCartney, who is always helpful to us at State and also Robert Palladino. Thank you, Robert and Dan.

I also want to thank the Commission Members for their guidance and putting this report together. Last January, about a month after we released the 2014 report, we got together and discussed changes that we want to see in this year's report. So, thank you as always for your guidance and encouragement in getting this done, and for all the time you spent reading and editing the final document.

I also want to thank Chris Hensman. He has produced in-house. We spent very little money on the design because Chris was able to do it. Our operating budget is \$134,000 and these books cost \$107 per book to print. So, a good amount of that money goes towards printing. And I want to thank Jasmine El Gamal for coming over and joining us for a little while to complete the CVE section of the report that she'll speak out. Michelle Bowen, who we can never do anything without, and Palak Bhandari and Hallie Gardner, who were our fantastic interns and showed a real knack for data

management, even though I don't think that's what they thought they were getting into when they joined us.

I'm going to run really quickly through just the very top line indicators of the report and the "top tens," as we're calling them. As you can see from this book, it's an enormous document, which includes details on more than 180 missions, 84 Educational Cultural Affairs programs, and 72 broadcasting services. But, we're just going to quickly do a cursory overview of the main findings.

In 2013, ACPD was reauthorized in the National Defense Authorization Act, which really changed the character of the Commission. It allowed, or called for, a report that breaks down the actual budget, and it's actually \$1.8 billion this year for the Broadcasting Board of Governors and the Public Diplomacy Office of the State Department combined. The mandate asked us to break it down in really granular detail, what is the cost per project, per participant? What are these programs and what do they mean? What is public diplomacy, which can be a very amorphous term, actually mean tactically? So, this report is supposed to do that.

We focus on FY 2014 actual budget data. It was the best that was available at the time we started gathering data. And, whenever possible, we do show FY 2015 planned amounts. We're almost near the end of the fiscal year, obviously, so we also show wherever possible FY 2016 requests. Since last year's report focused on FY 2013, we had a benchmark to compare this report to.

We ask that you don't look at this budget data in a vacuum. Everything varies greatly by context, especially when you get into Educational Cultural Affairs programs. There are different details to consider, such as the logistics involved. For instance, the Humphrey Fellowship is more costly sometimes because it is targeted at participants in developing countries. It costs more money than it might be for a Fulbright Fellow. The numbers don't really speak for themselves. You have to really dig in and have context, which we aim to provide wherever possible. And, the same goes for the 72 broadcasting services. There are program delivery costs associated with the services, in addition to the cost of creating content.

Next slide. The report is divided between Washington-directed activities and field-directed activities. Two-thirds of this report is a reference guide, which goes through all the different public diplomacy-related bureaus and offices that exist here in D.C. It also shows the different activities happening on the ground. We combine BBG services and Public Diplomacy activities by the six global regions: Africa, East Asia Pacific, Europe and Eurasia, Near East Asia, South and Central Asia, and the Western Hemisphere. We also focused on five countries this year, making five official visits to Algeria, South Africa, Kenya, Hungary and Moldova.

Now, the budget for FY 2014. The State Department spent about \$1.069 billion on public diplomacy. That is the Educational and Cultural Exchange budget, and what they call the ".7" funds from the diplomatic and consular programs budget combined. Essentially, what that means is that the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau has a protected budget. If you combine it with the PD budget line in the D&CP budget, you have \$1.069 billion. If you combine that figure with the BBG budget for FY 2014, which is \$733.5 million, that it comes to about \$1.8 billion. So, this is an increase from FY 2013, which was \$1.759 billion. But, PD at State and BBG combined is just 3.53 percent of the entire International Affairs budget. The executive summary goes through this in detail for FY '13, '14, '15 and '16.

We also wanted to show you where PD funds were spent by specific mission and we have this slide that looks at the top 10 funded PD missions worldwide. The mean is \$1.9 million, which is up from \$1.4 million in FY '13. The top missions, essentially, stayed the same from last year. There is just some variance in whether or not they went up or down. Afghanistan is still number one, and that number includes Economic Support Funds (ESF), as does Pakistan and Iraq. These three missions skew the numbers a bit because of these funds. So, the mean excludes Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Afghanistan was at \$56.482 million last year, which was down from \$65 million. Pakistan was at \$36 million, which was down from \$49 million. Iraq, essentially, is unchanged at \$10.7 million. Japan is still number four. It went from \$8.47 million to \$8.42 million. And then you see some increases in India, Brazil, China, Germany, Mexico, and Indonesia. Russia is no longer in the top 10; Indonesia replaced it this year. Russia went down by a couple of million dollars.

This next slide shows the Educational and Cultural Affairs programs in the ECE budget. This is specifically what our congressional reauthorization told us to do: break down the cost per participants or cost per project. If you do this, you will see that the top three programs are congressionally mandated programs: the Mike Mansfield Fellowship Program, which focuses on Japan; the U.S. South Pacific Scholarship Program; and the U.S. Timor Leste Scholarship Program. Those last two are four-year programs. We also showed all 84 ECA programs in here, so you see the programs like the U.S. Ambassadors Preservation Fund and other cultural programs. Number six, the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship, focuses on rising leaders in developing countries. And it goes on.

This year, Chris Hensman crunched the data of cost per day since these programs greatly differ by duration. So, if you actually look at the cost by day, the most expensive program is the International Visitor Leadership Program at \$1,138 per day. Yet this is a program that we strongly feel is important. It's a flagship program for public diplomacy, which brings professionals from around the world to the United States and establishes peer networks that deepen their expertise in their respective fields. You can read about all of these programs in the book. There are descriptions for all of them.

Chris Hensman: I just wanted to add that for the IVLP program, and many of these other high-cost-by-day programs, we found that the travel cost makes up a huge amount of that number. Perhaps next year, if we're reauthorized, we can disaggregate that amount from the number, from the total number so that we can get a better sense of what is really program cost, what is travel cost, etc.

Katherine Brown: Next slide. These are the programs with the least cost per day. If you look at number five and number six, these were two of the most expensive by participant, but they are four-year programs. So, they actually come out being some of the least expensive programs. We have a lot of Fulbright programs here, which the Commission is also very supportive of. There are also two really important German programs: the Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange, and the German American Partnership Program.

That's all I'm going to do for budget numbers at State Department Public Diplomacy. There's plenty more in the book.

For the top 10 broadcast language services, they essentially remain the same in the rankings from the last year. The Middle East Broadcasting Network increased from last year, as did the Office of Cuba Broadcasting. And then VOA Persian Service, Radio Sawa, the VOA Mandarin Service, the

worldwide English program, the VOA Mandarin, Radio Farda, which is the Persian language service, Radio Svoboda, which is Russian, and the VOA Afghan Service and also RFE/RL's Radio Azadi, which is also an Afghan service. So, that is essentially unchanged from the year before.

Moving into the analysis section of the report, we wanted to identify efforts that had made significant improvements since last year and/or were promising innovations. We wanted to acknowledge different areas of progress.

The most important thing we wanted to acknowledge were the PD officers that we met in the field. We were very taken with some of the Public Affairs Sections that were more under-resourced, especially in Algeria and Moldova, in addition to some of the officers working in central African countries. Moldova and Algeria presented two missions that were receiving some extra attention, but not consistently in order to overcome some big challenges. We provide more in-depth analysis in the report about what exactly they need and what the recommendations are. For Moldova, for instance, they're receiving some short-term aid, but they really need more permanent assistance in supporting independent Moldovan media, and bolstering their information operations capabilities so they can combat negative Russian media narratives. We're normally very much impressed with the PD officers in the field. We're always very grateful for the time that they give us, and we wanted to give them some extra support this year.

The second issue we wanted to call out is the progress in research and evaluation at the State Department. This is a significant area of focus for us, and we'll discuss it more later. But increasing the capacity for audience research, for digital analytics, and for process and impact evaluations is something we've been focused on the last two years. We completed a report a year ago called Data-Driven Public Diplomacy, where we made about 16 recommendations for how to improve the infrastructure at State and BBG for this work, but also methodological fixes. We worked with nine academics who examined more than 100 report documents to understand how to improve this work. We want to give credit to the Policy and Planning Resources Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy for developing a Director of Research and Evaluation position for the whole public diplomacy cone. As we can see, these efforts should not be silo-ed by bureau. We see them moving into a direction where they are more regularly supporting a feedback loop for better strategic planning.

We also want to give a lot of credit to the International Information Programs Bureau. American Spaces has been an important issue for the Commission this year. Again, we'll talk about that later. We believe that it is critical that the spaces are open and accessible to foreign audiences. A major challenge was making sure that there's complete coordination and communication with the other offices of the State Department that have a lot of say about that accessibility, such as the Overseas Building Operations Bureau and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. IIP has established a permanent working group to make sure these three bureaus are talking and anticipating future issues with these spaces. There are about 21 American Centers that are scheduled to close down in urban areas and move into more fortified new embassy compounds in the future. That is rather alarming. This new working group is aiming to kind of make sure that these spaces remain open and accessible. We want to give kudos to them for that.

We've also seen improvement in advancing public diplomacy professionals' training. We covered this issue in our June report, "Getting the People Part Right II," which is available at the front table, on the need for better recruitment, selection, professional development and advancement for PD

officers at State. And, we've seen some movement in the Policy Planning and Resources Office to address the issues.

We also want to call out a really small office in the ECA Bureau, called the ECA Collaboratory. This is a small group of people with zero program cost that is essentially trying to change the way that cultural and educational programs are approached. They're trying to implement more human-centered design, which thinks about the end user and what they really want from American public diplomacy programs -- and how they will use them. This helps officers to design programs that can be more impactful. We find what they are doing to be refreshing and we hope that their ideas spread through the cone.

We also want to acknowledge that President Obama has given a lot of attention to exchange programs, especially through the Young African Leaders Initiatives. This has really energized the public diplomacy space on the continent. It's also really attracted African youth to not only apply for the Mandela Fellowship, but to also come closer to the United States through the different networks that have been established around the initiative.

In addition, we were really impressed with Voice of America's role in sub-Saharan Africa, and we get into this more in the report. We feel as if they're filling a critical gap, often where there is no free press. VOA does not have surrogate stations in Africa. There are some Middle East Broadcasting Networks services that reach Africa, but essentially it's just Voice of America. We're impressed with the role that they have played in countering violent extremism and with supporting democratic transitions this last year, and especially with the Ebola crisis and their partnership with the BBC, to make sure that there were various public service announcements in Western Africa to ensure that people stayed healthy and Ebola-free.

We'd like to give some credit to Under Secretary Stengel, who consistently, in his communications with the officers, has talked about risk-taking and acknowledged the importance of not being so caught up in failure. Really seeing them just as setbacks, not outright failures. Calculated risk taking is critical if public diplomacy practice is going to advance, and his message that setbacks matter so we can learn and move forward is also critical.

The last of our top ten is the Public Affairs Media Hubs, which are located in the six different regions. We hear from journalists and from Public Affairs Officers like about the gap that the bureaus are filling to make sure that they're meeting regional needs. As we know, our Public Affairs Officers are usually focused on bilateral relations and on journalists who are based just in their country. This is difficult when U.S. foreign policy issues are transnational. For instance, the Brussels hub has supported media tours to counter negative Russian influence. The hubs also receive high marks from journalists.

Okay. I am going to hand it over to Jasmine El Gamal to discuss public diplomacy's role in countering violent extremism efforts.

Jasmine El Gamal: For the countering violent extremism section, we talked to individuals both inside and outside of government, in the field and here in D.C., trying to get a sense of their experiences and their insights in terms of how public diplomacy fits into our countering violent extremism strategies. As you'll see in the report, we talk about in the beginning how countering violent extremism is certainly not a new concept. We've been doing it for years, but what is new is the context in which we're operating right now. And, that's mostly related to the rise of internet

usage. It's never been easier to communicate. It's never been easier for people to choose what kind of information they want to receive and what kind of information they want to avoid.

If you look at the evolution of terrorist organizations or extremist organizations over the last ten years, and you compare an organization like al Qaida with ISIL, for example, and you see how differently those two organizations communicated. Al Qaida used to tape videos in a cave somewhere and they have to send it to Al Jazeera with someone and wait for it to be broadcasted. People had to wait to see it. And, it took a long time, they just weren't producing things very quickly. Well, if you look how ISIL is communicating now, it's immensely different. They're on Twitter, they're on Facebook, they have hundreds of thousands of sympathizers that don't necessarily need to get permission from a top leader to say something on Twitter or Facebook about ISIL. They know the general message, and they're getting it out there really quickly, and it's really easy to reach a wider audience. So, when we think about our public diplomacy activities and how we want to communicate with foreign audiences, that's something that we have to take into account.

So, in our conversations for this report, there were several themes that quickly became very obvious, either because they were articulated by several of our interview subjects, or in some cases by all of them. And, so what I'd like to do right now, briefly, is go through our top recommendations, which are based both on the themes that came up in the interviews, and then also our analysis of the conversations and reading the literature that's out there on public diplomacy and countering violent extremism. And, we'll be happy to take questions later on in the topic.

So, first, one theme that came across very quickly was the fact that there's so much incredible work being done at the State Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors when it comes to public diplomacy, communication, response, counter narratives. And, they're all targeting the same problem set, but they're kind of, they're not, they could be better aligned. There's not one single center of gravity in the State Department that can take short-term efforts, long-term efforts, reactionary efforts and proactive efforts, and bring them all together in a way that makes sense and that builds on each other within the context of a larger, (comprehensive) strategy coming out of the White House. So, one thing that we do recommend is for the State Department to look at the option of creating some sort of a cell where you could have people from the Office of the Undersecretary of State (for civilian) security, democracy and human rights as well as the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalitions Counter ISIL, General Allen, and all the work that he's doing to counter ISIL's narrative. The Office of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy, including the Center for Strategic Countering Terrorism Communications, the CSCC. So, the CSCC does a really excellent job of coordinating whole of government's strategic messaging and doing a lot of really good stuff with partners and outreach. But, they're very much focused mostly on communications, countering the message and not necessarily looking at the long term exchanges, funding issues, traditional public diplomacy activities. So, to the extent that we can bring all of those together in a way that makes sense, we think it would be helpful.

Along those lines of coordination and streamlining efforts is broadening the congressional (lens through which they view this issue to understand how public diplomacy fits into our CVE efforts. So, you have a lot, all the committees on the Hill that are looking at different aspects of CVE, depending on what department or agency they work for. And that's obviously a positive step. But, to the extent that House Foreign Affairs, Senate Foreign Relations committees can work with the Armed Services Select Intelligence, Homeland Security committees, and share what they know of what the executive branch is doing, we think it would be really helpful. And, to that end, we think that a series of briefings with interagency officials so that we can see a holistic view of what's

happening would be very helpful, and something that we would recommend.

The third and important thing that we found that was missing is just the idea of being able to leverage both internal and external expertise, to think about this issue. So, like I said in the beginning, CVE is not new, and using public diplomacy to counter violent extremism is not new. And, people have been working on this issue in the government for years. If you look at just right after September 11th up until now, the number of initiatives that have been launched, the number of things that have been tried and failed, we got the sense that there could be more, there could be more that could be done to take that expert—oh, sorry, now I'm conflating two things. Well, I'll talk about these two things at the same time. Establishing a foundation of knowledge for CVE and leveraging both internal and external expertise.

So, the first is, we think these are related. There are a lot of experts, there are a lot of people in, whether social scientists, people from the tech industry, former CVE focused government officials, non-government officials who have worked on this for a really long time, who are available to help with ideas, with brainstorming sessions, to be sort of an advisory group, if you will. I think the administration, from what we've seen, they do a good job of reaching out to people, outside of the government. But, it's fairly ad hoc, and I don't think that everyone who works on CVE issues, especially public diplomacy related issues, has access to some of these individuals. And, so to the extent that we can have some sort of advisory group that will be available as, like I said, brainstorming or periodic in-person meetings and things, that would be helpful.

And, related to that, the establishing a foundation of knowledge for CVE, we think that it's really important to go back 10, 15 years and look at everything that we've tried before. Look at what works and what didn't. If it didn't work, why didn't it work? And, if there's something that worked really well, how can we reinvest in it? As anyone who works in government knows, it's hard enough to review what happened to you that day, because of the tyranny of the inbox. So, we recommend that we'd like to try to work with an outside thing tank or some sort of organization that could really think about this stuff and offer a different perspective.

The fifth recommendation we have is providing personnel with the technology to understand CVE trends. And, one of the really positive things that we found is that the CSCC is currently working to develop a dashboard, which would function basically as a real-time social media monitoring tool, to allow analysts to track trends and developments. So, they could look at messages or tweets that are coming out of a certain country, saying, "We're joining ISIS, because we don't have any economic opportunities." Or, "We're joining ISIL, because of this." And, so to the extent that we are able to track trends and that way we can respond better to them. It would be helpful, and to that end, if we could—one of our recommendations is to make this too, not only to develop it, but to make it available to a wide array of PD professionals globally, not just within the State Department here in D.C. So, if the team here in D.C., for example, found, using this dashboard, that people were joining ISIL because of the lack of economic opportunities, then they could share that information. Then people in the field, who could also see those trends, could quickly implement an on-the-ground program that directly addressed economic opportunities. So, whether it's providing training, providing leadership, entrepreneurial, or education opportunities, all of that stuff that would respond specifically to that grievance, I think it would be really helpful.

Six is adding CVE expertise to critical missions. So, every city presents unique challenges when it comes to communication and interaction with local populations. There are different identity issues, like I said, economic grievances. There are different things that draw people to violent extremism.

Not everyone is the same. And, so we have, like Katherine mentioned, amazing PD officers, amazing political officers in all of our embassies. But, it's a bit unfair to ask them to focus strictly on countering violent extremism when they have so many other things that they need to do as part of their jobs. And, so we think that picking a handful of critical missions in very high profile countries or where violent extremism is a real problem, and having a dedicated countering violent extremism expert who could work with the political section, work with the public diplomacy section, based on the local context and tailor a response is something that we should think about doing.

And, with that, I just offer a word of caution in the sense that we should also be careful not to label any program that happens in certain communities or certain geographic locations as a countering violent extremism program. So, just because there's a program on education in the Muslim community in Egypt or somewhere else, doesn't mean it's necessarily CVE. And, I think that we sometimes have a tendency to think that way, and it risks alienating the communities that we're trying to work with. And, it also risks kind of damaging traditional public diplomacy programs in those countries that are not necessarily related to countering violence extremism. So, on one hand, we should focus on having someone dedicated on CVE to work in certain missions, but at the same time be careful not to conflate that with other programs that are not CVE-related.

So, lastly, and related, we'd like to acknowledge that responsibility and success with these issues ultimately lies with local actors. And, the reason we state that is because you all know that we had a summit on countering violent extremism last February. And, it was a very high-level summit, and there were foreign ministers, all of our top-level officials here in the U.S. Since then, there have been many regional summits and we have the U.N. General Assembly coming up, where CVE is going to be a huge focus of the conversation. We think that high level support and attendance of these conferences is generally really positive, and it can give efforts an extra kick and can help shine the spotlight on an issue.

However we just would like to caution, kind of be wary of countries that come to these summits and use their attendance as a way to check the box on countering violent extremism efforts. Some of these countries come in and they give a speech, and there are great photo ops and there are great communiquees that come out of these conferences. And, that's a positive, but that's not what, that's not where the real work is. And, so what we would like to see are at least one day when these summits are held that is dedicated to workshops, where people who are on the ground, working these issues, implementing these programs, have a chance to meet each other, discuss and share lessons learned and best practices. And to have at least one of those sessions be focused on public diplomacy.

So, with that, I'll stop here and we'll be happy to take questions later. Thank you.

Sim Farar: Thank you, Jasmine. That was very, very informative. Thank you very much. Now, we have Chris Hensman at the podium.

Chris Hensman: Hello, everyone. Thank you for coming today. I really appreciate your presence. I'm going to talk to you a little bit about countering negative Russian influence, and we're very careful to talk about the negative influence specifically, because our recommendations here aren't to try and push Russia out of the picture, there is a place for public outreach for soft power from all countries and communities. And, in reference to Russia, we've seen a trend where Russia's expending significant amounts of time, energy, manpower towards undermining the United States,

the EU countries in, and leadership in Central Asia, etc. Not necessarily to get people to like them more, but to just make it more difficult for these institutions to hold Russia accountable with regards to Russian aggression in Ukraine, etc.

So we were turned on to this issue by our colleagues in Congress who had increasing concern about Russian propaganda in particular. I was able to travel to Europe, to Ukraine and Estonia, Latvia and Poland, Belgium, Russia and Katherine was also able to travel to the region to Germany, Hungary and Moldova. There, we spoke to a lot of people on the ground, government officials, journalists, civil society and leaders and people from these communities. And, we found varying degrees of concern, in particularly in the information space. I think everyone agreed that Russian [government] control over Russian language media was complete, and that this led to a degradation of journalistic practices in certain areas. And, so I think everyone agreed that Russian media had problems that needed to be addressed.

When we broaden that aperture and talked about Russian influence in particular communities across Europe, I think there were varying levels of concern. There are a number of European countries that weigh much more highly their domestic challenges, or other regional challenges, than they fear Russian influence. So in our discussions with a number of these groups, everyone agreed that what Russia's doing in Ukraine is extremely concerning but, when we talked about Russian influence in other parts of Europe, there were varying degrees of acknowledgement.

But, we do see it. We see that now Russia has a controlling stake in Euro News in the Russian language programming that it provides. And, we've seen a change in that programming. We see Russia's movements with RT and the massive investment that they're making and the questionable journalistic practices at times, of RT in the region. We see Russian funding of think tanks throughout the region to push their counter narratives to the West. And, we also see heavy influence and investing in Russian cultural activities, which in and of themselves are not necessarily negative. But, what we have seen is that there has been [Russian] investment in certain holidays and memorials for various World War II events that causes a lot of conflict between communities in the Baltics in particular.

So seeing a lot of these challenges a number of different areas, we talked to folks from across the government about what the strategy is to combat a number of these issues. And what we found is that an overarching strategy is still not complete, that there have been efforts to try and look at all of the different aspects of negative Russian influence in Europe, in Central Asia and around the world but, they haven't really come together in a coherent, overall strategy. What we have seen is that there are a number of individual efforts, especially in the public diplomacy space, where people are trying to push back against specifically Russian propaganda. We think that those efforts are admirable and they are continuing to mature, and they need to continue to develop into the future.

Second, in cultural programming, we need to review the public diplomacy programs in frontline states. Right now, we don't have a very good sense of how well we're targeting key audiences within some of these communities. If you look at Estonia or Latvia that have significant Russian-speaking communities, we don't really know how well we are incorporating those communities into our programs. We know that we are reaching some of individual participants, but I think we need to make a much more concerted effort to proactively go out and recruit people for accessible programming in the form of exchanges and cultural programs.

Third, we need to look at additional support for countries in crisis. There's a number of PD offices

in the region that are woefully under-resourced and under-staffed to really implement the types of programs that we expect them to implement. Many of these posts are one, two, three-person operations, and if you have someone who is fully dedicated to messaging efforts, that makes it really difficult to try and do the more nuanced audience segmentation that we need to be doing in order to effectively combat this problem.

Fourth, which relates to the third, we need to look to help posts that have seen an increased U.S. military presence or a NATO presence in their countries. What we found is that many countries are welcoming these training missions. Poland is an example. Latvia is another example. But, when these U.S. military teams come through, they're not bringing with them experienced public affairs support. And, so the embassy is forced to step up and provide public affairs and press support for these visiting delegations. The challenge is the lack of capacity, which means that all of the PD sections other projects stop. And, when you have the level of frequency we've seen, where you're having weekly, or twice-monthly visits from military training missions, it really interrupts the operations of those sections. And, so we need to find a way to really help them there.

Fifth, we need to retain our PD footprint in Russia by any means we can. And, I say that, because we've seen a number of closures of American spaces across Russia. We've seen issues with the FLEX program being shut down, USAID's efforts being shut down. And, I think that with increased tensions between Russia and the United States politically, we need to depend on these cultural and public diplomacy soft power programs to make sure that the safety net of people—the people-to-people relations-- is still there and is still strong. So, even if the American center is closing, we need to find other ways to remain engaged with Russian people, who, from our visit there, do still want to have relationship with the United States and are very much interested in particular the educational and exchange opportunities that we offer, and the English language opportunities.

And, last, we need to continue to expand BBG coverage in the region. In particular, we need to look at how we are reaching these Russian-speaking audiences within some of the countries that I've mentioned. Right now, we have aggregate data, but we need to do a better job of looking at, for example, in Latvia, where most Latvians get their, their entertainment and news through cable providers, the Russian communities get it through terrestrial airwaves, through the old analog system. And, so as systems are upgraded, as programming is provided on paid systems, the communities that we're actually trying to reach may not be able to access the content that we're pushing out. And, so we need to make sure that we are continuing to change the way that we're delivering this content and make sure that we're effectively reaching the people that we're trying to reach.

Sim Farar: Thank you very much, Chris. We appreciate it. I'd like to ask Commissions Members Anne Wedner and Ambassador Penne Peacock to share their impressions of the Young African Leaders Initiative.

Anne Wedner: I'll start. Penne and I traveled to South Africa to do a site visit, which also coincided with a meeting of the PAOs based in central and eastern Africa, which was taking place in Johannesburg. So, we got a lot of input. We met a lot of Mandela Fellowship Program alumni. To back up a little bit, we'll talk about the Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI), which was born in an effort to try and reach out to the so-called youth bulge that was happening in Africa, but also in Southeast Asia under YSEALI and the Western Hemisphere under YLAI. The Obama administration began to prioritize reaching out to global youth. These initiatives are meant to focus on young professionals who are involved in public policy, civil society and entrepreneurship careers

in critical regions for the United States. The participants are expected to get out of these experiences real leadership skills and to also create networks among themselves while they're in the United States that hopefully they'll carry with them for a lifetime. The first region was Africa, and that was YALI.

We think that it's been great that President Obama has given public diplomacy this attention. We can certainly see that this has energized public diplomacy sections and activities. And, as I said, Penne and I were able to travel there and meet these young leaders who were totally impressive. We believe that this program will help improve how they relate to the United States and also how they relate to their neighbors from other African nations.

We're hoping that ultimately this effort spurs new economic growth, in addition to peace and prosperity. It's a tall order given the size of the continent and the challenges that they face. But, we applaud this effort. And, that said, even though we applaud the effort, we have some changes and suggestions for the program. And Penne is going to talk about what our recommendations are.

Penne Peacock: Good morning, nice for you all to come today. We appreciate it and this big book is really the New York phonebook with a red cover. It takes a lot of looking at. But, I wanted to bring YALI to a human point for you, besides all the statistics you've been hearing. We have three recommendations for the State Department. One of them is to prioritize the process evaluations and the initial impact studies. It's been a successful program for the past two years, and ongoing, lots of things are happening.

For instance, in the first year, they thought they would probably get 10,000 applicants across Africa. They got 50,000 applications for 500 spots. It's just an enormous thing. What we found as we spoke with PAOs in Africa was that the sections can get overwhelmed with these applications. Someone has to read them. And then someone has to decide who gets to come and who doesn't get to come to an interview. And, then they come to an interview and then they are chosen and submitted as possible candidates. So all those applications take a lot of time away from their regular days. So it's a great program and it's probably our best success in a very, very long time, and kudos to the president for thinking of it and recognizing some of the things that were going on in Africa.

So our second recommendation is to increase the embassy staff so that they can process these applications and not be taken away from their every day jobs, which they also need to be doing. These applicants are fascinating. These young leaders have a master's degree or a PhD. They are bright, they are educated, they want something to happen in their country, and they are so grateful, so grateful to come to America that it makes it worthwhile.

The third recommendation is to communicate more directly the purpose of the three tracks of the Mandela Fellowship. They are public management, civic leadership and entrepreneurship. But, sometimes, all of these people who apply are not certain where they fit in to the program and they're a little uneasy about could they apply or should they apply. And, that's something we have to work on so that they do understand more.

So, those are our three recommendations. On a personal note, for the last two years, YALI has sent a group to the University of Texas at Austin. You can probably tell where I'm going on that one. It has been very, very exciting and twice they have asked me to do the welcome the morning that these young people arrive. And, it's absolutely marvelous. First of all, they're so tired, they're in a hot spot all of a sudden in the middle of the summer, and they're just thrilled. And, to watch them at

that first meeting and then I follow them through the summer, their six weeks, to suddenly become great friends. It's just a program you all ought to be proud of, because it's doing something wonderful. And, then they go back and now they're YALI alums like the Fulbright alums, and it's terrific. It's just a program that works and I think there are 25 universities that do this. It's not a perfect program, but it's one of the really, really good ones and I hope you all can understand after hearing all these statistics how we really dig down and we figure out what's going on.

And, I must say, I salute Katherine and Chris and all the community for doing this report. Because it takes a lot of time and understanding and as you all know, because you are all public servants, you've got to get a feeling of comfort with the people you meet with, some that will talk to you. And, that's what we're about. So, thank you for coming this morning.

Sim Farar: Thank you very much, Penne and Anne. Katherine, would you wrap things up for us here on our findings?

Katherine Brown: I'm going to be really quick and go through the remaining pieces of the analysis section of the report. We just covered the three presidential areas of focus for public diplomacy the last year: CVE, countering negative Russian influence, and the Young African Leaders Initiatives. You can also read more about the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative and the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative in the book as well.

The Commission had three core priorities for the last year: improving research and evaluation, strengthening public diplomacy personnel, and keeping American spaces open and accessible. Some of the recommendations are redundant from what I covered earlier. But we want to really emphasize the importance of improving research and evaluation for public diplomacy activities. Last year, we found in our report, *Data-Driven Public Diplomacy*, that the infrastructure and databases that exist at the State Department and at the BBG are insufficient. The BBG's are more advanced than the State Department, yet neither are sufficient to assess long-term progress and this makes it very difficult to provide Congress with the data that they need to judge the effectiveness of programs. We are committed to strengthening this capacity within the Department and also at the BBG and to build the personnel support that they need to systemically provide Congress with data.

It's evident to us that reforms are underway in research and evaluation, but there are still many roadblocks. For instance, there's the Privacy Act of 1974, the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, and restrictions with hiring fulltime staff. As we know, a lot of staffers in the State Department, especially FSOs, are generalists. They're not the methodologists that are needed to do a lot of this work. Getting new staff on board requires a lengthy security clearance process, which was not helped by the recent breach of OPM.

In order for this progress to continue, there must be sustained communication from PD leadership that research and evaluation matters. We saw this year with the QDDR that there's also a commitment to having more data-driven policies at the State Department and public diplomacy can definitely contribute to that. Not having a feedback loop from evaluation reports makes strategic planning incredibly difficult. It also makes communication with Congress incredibly difficult. Therefore, the main recommendations are to increase the research budgets. The norm for philanthropic foundations and USAID for this work is 3 percent of the total budget. Currently, both the BBG and the State Department fall short of that. We'd like to see, in the next five years, the research and evaluation budgets increase closer to 3 percent of their total budgets. We're happy to see the Under Secretary's Policy Planning and Resources Office more focused on cross-bureau

research and evaluation. We also commend the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for giving a lot of attention to this issue in their State Authorization bill. We feel Congress sending a signal to the State Department that they need to focus on this more is very important.

The next issue that's important to us is strengthening public diplomacy personnel. Here we go back to a report that was originally done in 2008 by the Commission called, Getting the People Part Right, and we updated it this past June. The 2015 recommendations are mainly to also strengthen the Policy, Planning and Resources Office to have a focus on how we're recruiting, selecting and developing public diplomacy professionals. This includes civil servants, not just FSOs. They need to be more involved in the recruitment process. And we need to raise the standard for training and education. If the State Department's going to hire generalists for a 27-year career, that puts a lot of demands on the quality and consistency of professional education and development opportunities. That means that we need to up the game there.

The last area of focus is keeping American spaces open and accessible, which is based on a white paper we completed in May. I'm going to keep this very brief because we already talked about it. We see progress and a commitment between the Overseas Building Operations Bureau, Diplomatic Security, and the International Information Programs to establish a permanent working group to try to keep spaces open and accessible. But, we also think that now that IIP's at a place that they've actually taken stock of how many American Spaces exist, there's over 700 around the world, and they have established aesthetic and programming standards to ensure that programming is more connected to advancing policy, there really needs to be more impact studies about why American spaces matter and, why they're vital platforms for engaging foreign audiences and building relationships.

That is it for Commission priorities. Briefly, you can go through these in the book. A lot of these are repeats, so we wanted to break out recommendations by offices. For R/PPR, we really see it as the major core of the public diplomacy family and really hope that they will continue to develop systems to strategically plan better and provide better guidance to the field. With the Public Affairs Bureau, we've seen a lot of progress in that last year, especially toward them moving more towards research and evaluation. We've been able to work with them closely in developing some models. And, so we hope that they continue on that course.

Next slide. IIP, repeat of everything I said. We also really hope that the cap for Assistant Secretaries is lifted so that the IIP Coordinator can become one. The current IIP Coordinator, because he has the relationships, has a seat at the table with State Department leadership. But that isn't guaranteed for the next one. So, it needs that position needs to be elevated to Assistant Secretary level.

For ECA, we really feel that there needs to be a deep review of existing ECA programs to make sure that there aren't too many conflicting models or brands, and to really understand which ones are relevant to foreign policy priorities of the day and which ones can cut down their overhead. We'd like to see an effort in the next year or so on the focus on the different 84 educational and cultural affairs programs and comparing them with U.S. mission needs to make sure they align. We also want to continue to see the policy and alumni affairs units be linked with their evaluations office.

And, then moving to CSCC really quickly. We want to see them improve their audience research and digital analytics capacity. They are trying to do that, so we commend them for that and they'll

continue to. And, we also want to make sure they work to understand the local priorities of missions and how programs and messages may need to be better tailored to meet them.

Okay, last. BBG. Again, this is a repeat of increasing their budget more towards 3 percent, up from the current 1 percent. And, as we said it earlier about VOA Africa, we really want to see an increase in their local reporting in the continent and to increase the amount of FM transmitters and expand local languages to make sure that they're reaching audiences that normally don't have access to professional news. And, as Chris said, increase the coverage of RFE/RL in Central Asia and Eastern Europe to counter negative Russian influence.

I'm going to stop there. We're going to go to questions.

Sim Farar: Katherine's very, very fast. Thank you, Katherine. I'd like to turn this over to the Commission Members to see if they have any thoughts they want to add or questions to the representatives from the various State Department or BGG offices present today.

Anne Wedner: Sim, can I just make one comment that Jasmine's presentation I thought underscored? I feel like one theme that emerges out of this discussion is that often we're talking to ourselves in Washington, and we're not think about how it comes across internationally. And, so when we're talking about countering violent extremism and we're talking about our preference for doing that, how insulting is that to the partners that we're trying to foster in those regions? I mean, it's kind of like they're aware of it, but they rather that we not point it out all the time. I think your point is excellent, Jasmine, on that, but I think that more globally we could probably look at how we in Washington interact with the world, how we speak about our programs. So, I would love to see that as something we pursue in just thinking about it for the next year.

Sim Farar: Any other questions?

Penne Peacock: I agree very much with that. We need to make sure they are not misunderstanding what we're trying to say. But, you've got violence right in the Middle East. So, I mean, how can you say come to our countering violence extremism conference and then say, but we didn't really mean it's *your* violence. I mean, I know, so make it be some rebranding on that one.

Sim Farar: Okay. Thank you, Commission Members. We'd now like to open this up to questions for the audience. If there are any? Would you please state your name and affiliation before asking your question? Anyone have any questions? All yours, Bill.

Katherine Brown: Any questions?

William J. Hybl: Let me just say again, thank you for being here. An ongoing basis, we will continue and many of you have been at our discussion groups as we've tackled some of the tough problems in public diplomacy around the world. We'll be back doing that. If you have any thoughts or suggestions, certainly talk with Katherine.

We want to thank all the participants and the staff -- Katherine and your whole team, Chris, for putting this together. And, we look forward to seeing you in hopefully about 90 days as we address another good topic. Thank you.

Katherine Brown: We'll stick around to answer any questions.