

JEFFREY GEDMIN

SMART POWER SPEAKER SERIES

Q&A Session Transcript

February 14, 2008

CAROLA MCGIFFERT: I'm going to take the opportunity to ask you the first question, it's on the budgeting issue. Obviously I think most people know here that your budget for international broadcasting was slashed, and after the Cold War and the so-called "peace dividend", but we are clearly a nation at war in different ways in different countries, and I'm wondering—the budget that just came out, is kept—has kept international broadcasting relatively flat, and I'm wondering—your opportunity here in Washington, are you going to be talking to people in Congress and the administration about how to deal with that? ---and to follow on, and part of that question, given the stories that you just told us, is spent on security? And how much is spent on the actual broadcasting side of it?

JEFFREY GEDMIN: Umm, to the first. We have a board, as I said, of Democrats and Republicans. And they do a terrific job, and I'm speaking from myself (not from anybody, or any institution) they do a terrific job under very difficult circumstances, because the budgetary requirement is just bloody tough. It is their job supported by the heads of these entities to inform, to educate, to paint the right picture, and I think we do that. The trouble is this flat budget thing, and in my view, uh—we made a mistake and we haven't corrected the mistake. I mean my budget, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's budget at the end of the Cold War was about two-fifty, and they slashed about seventy-something, and of course you understand the logic I mean, good-heavens, you know that's the great thing about this country. The Cold War is over and people don't want new wars, cold or hot, and there's nothing wrong with saying now we have to take care of roads and hospitals and schools and healthcare. I mean the logic is very decent and very honorable and typically American short-sighted, if I may say. And I think, that if Americans could understand more about the value that United States must play in this informational game—don't play you lose, play okay and you're in the game, play well and you have a chance—I mean Al Jazeera? They're triple my budget. Good heavens. I mean they figured something out, okay? So first of all I understand it, but there's a tradition to this—I think it's short sighted. I think, I mean I was in Prague, getting settled last spring—early summer. I was sitting in a café, there were three couples—this is my naïve take on this thing (you can say it's more complicated) but I think there's some truth to this. Three couples from Memphis, about sixty-years old they're on holiday—this is last May—and we realize I'm from the United States—they're from the United States I was there with a friend. They say, "What do you do?"—while "Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty". And they say, "While you know", they're a lawyer and a teacher, "we've heard of that, but remind us what that is" (maybe they're being polite, you know). I tell them what that is, they're not foreign affairs experts, maybe they were just being kind to me, I mean it's at a café in Prague they say, "Good heavens that sounds great—worth every

penny of our tax-payer money.” I think it’s a pretty good case to make, and I think as the United States realizes that 9/11 was not a blip, not temporary, the challenges are bigger, they’re longer term, maybe we can turn out more interest. Your second question was?

MCGIFFERT: It was security concerns, and how much of the budget actually has to now go for security to protect the journalists.

GEDMIN: Well for us, and we’re talking to our board, and our board has been brilliant in getting more support for security, the trick is it’s not just a money issue. I’ll just be very blunt, uh, I’ll give you an example. The better—Jackson Deal is here he’s one of my informal advisers on Iran. The better we do on Iran, the harder it is for our journalists. Let me just give you a concrete example. And now it’s a trend, and now it’s not uncommon, and money alone won’t solve the problem. We’ve got forty-three Iranians working for me in Prague. They’re monarchists, and left-wing social democrats, and they’re poets and professors and broadcasters and they’re 22-years old and 7-years old—but they all think that Mullah rule is illiberal and not worthy of a great nation like Iran, and I think they all feel that way. And what happens? It’s happened three times in the last six months. A journalist of ours in Prague gets a notice from an Iranian court that he must come home and face charges of—it’s kind of a rewriting of the old Soviet law—things like, “slandering the supreme leader” or, “acting against national security”. They’re just reporters. They’re just doing information. And so what happens? The reported was like, “I’m naïve I’m not going back”, and then the court will send them a notice saying, “okay, we would like \$50,000 U.S. bail”—and therefore they say well, “I’m not doing that” and then the court will say, “okay, you’re aunt’s house will do nicely.” There is a list of tricks that they have is seemingly endless. So, to answer your question. Yes we need more money. Yes we’re getting more money for that, and yes money is part of the solution, but the trouble is, as we—as I said in my remarks, my prepared remarks, as we do better with soft power, the autocrats do better with soft power too. They don’t just come after you with a baseball bat, they come after you in a range of insidious and effective ways.

MCGIFFERT: Thank you. We’re going to open it up. We have microphones, if you could please just say your name and your affiliation I’ll start up right here in front.

HOUMAN SEYSON: Hello My name is Houman Seyson from Radio Farda, actually. You talked about surrogates rate you and media. In case of Iran, because of not having political relationship and all that during the last 30 years, we have hard time finding reporters inside Iran. And, because of that how can we get to a real surrogates radio, or any other type of media—and how can we go about that challenge?

GEDMIN: Well its—well you know because you’re my colleague and you’re in the trenches, you know this better than I, it’s bloody hard. But the trouble is, if we got to what—if we follow your logic, get to perfect surrogate broadcasting where we have unlimited access, then we’re out of business too. If it’s in the, if it’s so porous and so open and so malleable that we’re probably not needed. Umm, they’re different things. Let me tell you what we did during the Cold War. We’ve got a gentleman who worked for me,— works for me, he’s in his seventies now, he used to run the Czechoslovak service

during the Cold War, well they didn't have people formally on the ground and the, the Czechoslovak socialist republic, but they had a reasonably well developed network of people that passed information, verified information tipped on stories and gave ideas. Now, during the Cold War like today, it's difficult and dangerous, this gentleman who ran the service during the Cold War, the service was infiltrated, they tried to kidnap him, they tried to kidnap his ten year old son—he told me this a couple of months ago over coffee. You know—they argue the secret police files revealed, that I had an invaluable source in Prague in the central committee, and that's why they wanted to kidnap my ten year old son- and he smiled he said “we did, it was a great source”. It was utterly reliable, year after year after year, so to answer your question, it is a pretty significant detriment, and you and your colleagues you don't have a well developed network—or the network that does exist informally is constantly endangered or threatened or intimidated hampers what we can do, because again—you know better than I, Iranians don't want news from Prague. They don't want news from Washington. They want news from their own country. So you, we are doing the best we can. And, we'd like to develop the network but it is difficult and dangerous.

RIMA MERHI: Rima Merhi, I'm a research fellow at the Middle East Institute. I'm Lebanese, I've lived ten years in the Middle East. And, I'm sorry to tell you but I've never used Al Hura and I'm not sure I have even heard about it. But I have frequently used Jazeera and the radio, I'm wondering, to what extent do you think that you have an audience in the Middle East, and how can you sell “soft power” in a region where on the ground, hard power—yes hard power dominates.

GEDMIN: Next Question. [laughter] Umm, to the latter, umm, it's your neighborhood, not mine—and that's a vexing problem because hard power is central. And, by the way, American hard power is central too, we did remove Saddam Hussein from power, the Libyans did give up their nuclear program, and if you infer from the NIE and the Iranians actually did halt work on their nuclear program, Iraq's invasion may have had something to do with that. So, we know hard power, we do hard power. Uhm, first of all I don't represent Al Hura so I'm a different entity, and talking for colleagues—that's not fair. Al Hura is new, okay, Al Hura is external, al Hura is under-funded in terms of what Al Jazeera can do. And Al Jazeera has cornered the market in a very powerful and effective way. Now, does that mean that we have no numbers or no anecdotal evidence that Al Huru is doing nothing- No I don't think that's true. But if you're saying that Al Jazeera is the dominate force, it's definitely the dominate force. And there maybe others better qualified to talk about how you increase the value and the reach of American broadcast in the Middle East. But, it's tough. It's tough. Very tough market.

MCGIFFERT: The lady back there.

MINDY REISER [Global Peace Services U.S.A.]: Hey, I'm Mindy Riser, a sociologist and a writer. I'm curious in terms of our fellow developed countries—what kind of efforts they're doing. We talked about Al Jazeera, some of the indigenous broadcasting programs and projects in different parts of the world. But, what about the UK? What

about Germany? What about Japan? What are they doing? And are they doing a good job, are we really unique in what we're up to in terms of the developed countries?

GEDMIN: Well, you know. Are we really unique? I'd say no. First before broadcasting, when you think about the NGO world, we have the great National Endowment for Democracy we have the great Freedom House—and some of them are represented here. But the Germans actually, early on were pretty good. Being the foundation at work, and promoting and supporting civil society throughout the world—and they did so in Spain, they did so in Portugal, [inaudible]---social democrats, and they still do. So on the NGO side, I would—you can judge yourself what instances are doing what and how effective it is. But they are in the game and they have been in the game and in some cases wisely earlier than us. In broadcast, it's a little bit different. There's Deutsche Welle there's BBC, there's a completely self-serving arch but I'm going to make it to you anyway because it's my chance to be a little self-serving for the next few minutes. Our Iranian, who was detained, the one who was visiting her 95 year old mother, interrogated her before they parked her in Tehran, they released her after and (I'm sorry, I can't see you over there) they said to her, umm, if you must go back to your current stations (it's called radio farad, it's our service) if you must go back there, the interrogator said to her. You should really report only on light international news, but nothing domestic. And the second thing they said to her, is "but anyway, why don't you go get a job with Deutsche Welle? Or BBC?" So, you know those are fine services with fine people and fine missions—but, you know, of course, I took it as a compliment—we must have a little better handle on the pulse of things, in some way. You know we are probably a bit compared to those services, well, let's be specific. Look at the BBC Iran, they broadcast in Persian about 6 ½ hours a day. Our mission is to promote democratic values and institutions you can argue what that means in the practical—but that's what we're about doing. That's not the mission of the BBC Persian. If you look at their mission statement and words of their general director, they say, our job in Persian is to inform Iranians about world news and the important role Iran plays in the region. And I can't prove this to you, but I'm guessing that if we're doing about 20 percent domestic and about 80% international, that you're nodding—they're doing about the opposite.

MCGIFFERT: In the back, sir?

[inaudible] from Radio Free Asia, Uh, I want to turn the focus from Europe to Asia since we are [inaudible] big brother, China, reaches obviously powerful than Europe and Russia—since they are adopting the so called, "illusion of choice" in China, there are so many, or a variety of entertainment news, forever indecency you can find—even on the internet. So, this year, since we have some self interest here at the BBG is going to attend to the of the [inaudible] service and the Cantonese. So, you know, when we are dealing with China, an even bigger broader than Russia, and after in this post Cold War era, and the U.S. is going to build a so-called "strategic partnership with China", So, uh, what can we do? As, you know, to be an information to China. How can we do it? An even bigger broader than Russia, since China is so strong, and we have no way in any information, penalize or penetrate into the different region, like Tibet, and even in the Guangdong area? That's why the BBC, okay—even the BBC, the BBC have said some of

their Chinese service, So why should the U.S. keep the Mandarin Chinese service? We will ignore the Chinese government? It's not healthy in establishing a so-called "strategic relationship" or partnership with China. So, do you agree with the kind of cutting back and [?] the whole Cantonese, since China is so much bigger, so much more powerful,

GEDMIN: Boy I hope there's no Russians in this audience, you're going to hurt somebody's feelings, you said that about three times now. Umm, let me take the part of the question that maybe I can try to answer, and leave the rest for others, because I'm not a China expert—I'm not the president of free Asia and you've got a great service there and a great president. I think, umm, I'll answer what I want to answer and you'll see if it fits your question. First of all, we have an interest doing what we're doing because we're not Deutsche Welle we're not BBC and we're not others, and we have an interest in making sure what we do as broadcast entities is consistent and constant with American interests. That's number one. Number two, I take the point that the Chinese are playing the Russian game—or maybe the Russians are playing the Chinese game, and I don't know what to say about that. Because I think we'd all agree in this room, retreat is not an option, but they're getting ruthlessly sophisticated. I mean I think also in China the NGO scene, and we've seen in China recently (as my understanding) a proliferation of NGOs, environmental, you name it, but not political NGOs that challenge the monopoly of the communist party. I mean, there is a parallel to Russia, but what do you do? You don't duck and retreat you have to figure out, if they're clever and they have measures we have to have counter-measures. The last point, if I understood you correctly, you know with Russia and China we do have a dilemma, right? But this is the walking and chewing gum at the same time. This is accepting the dissonance and hypocrisy but moving ahead. You know, we do, the United States does have strategic relationships with these countries and the United States will most obviously not suddenly transform itself into Amnesty International (a great institution by the way) but we have trade relations. We have hard security relations. We have interconnectivity in economic and banking and in other allies, including in Europe. There are in some instances important areas of cooperation in the war on terror, so nobody, Democrat-Republic, Barrack Obama, uh this Bush or the other Bush is going to tear all that up and say, "let's go on a great human rights crusade, let's take the Pentagon budget and give it to international broadcasting". So there's going to be balancing, there's going to be contradiction, but I think, Again—as I said in my notes, That's the contradiction that we Americans are best at. I mean nobody can do that contradiction like we can. Ronald Reagan did that, right? Ronald Reagan did not break bilateral ties with the Soviet Union. Ronald Reagan did not say, "I'm not going to talk to Gorbachev", he didn't not stand up people at the summits—he said we're going to negotiate, talk, dialogue, all those things, and in a vigorous, robust, parallel track, we're going to human rights, we're going to insist on Helsinki, I'm going to meet with people in Moscow, I'm going to put—otherwise, you can't do one, you gotta pick one. You can do both, and it's untidy, and a little chaotic or contradictory—but you can definitely do both. I think with Russia and China we're in that area where we have to do both, and live with the untidiness.

CAROLA MCGIFFERT: We often find, although we're not an advocacy organization, we often find the CSIS website blocked in China for a few days, and then it reappears,

[GEDMIN: Perfect example, perfect example.] so some of these things are a little bit of a mystery. But, other questions, I know I saw a lot of hands. Here, this gentleman has been very patient.

MICHAEL ALLEN: Thank you, Michael Allen from the great National Endowment for Democracy, thanks for the plug. You mentioned [inaudible], and I agree, excellent analysis on the fact that the Kremlin is increasingly proactive in this field now, and I think this applies to the other authoritarian regimes as well, whether it's China projecting soft power through its Confucius institutes and development projects in African and so on, or whether it's Iran funding Al Jazeera—as well as the T.V. station and so on. So the authoritarians are becoming much more, sophisticated operationally but they've also become much more sophisticated ideologically [inaudible] the narratives that lead to democracy, they can't afford that particular form of sovereign democracy or Islamic democracy in Iran. To what extent, to the fact that this is now “contest domain” as it were, operationally and ideologically and others that impact on the work that you do. Do you find that it affects the way you develop your stories?

GEDMIN: I think it has impact, Michael. First of all, umm, some of this is not new—the sovereign democracy, the managed democracy—I mean, the funny thing is pretty obvious. The democracy thing has been around for decades now, I mean the worst dictatorships in the world for years have felt utterly obligated—you know, the more “people's republic” and “democratic” in it, probably the less democratic it is. But, for years, and decades, nobody has wanted to stand up and say, “well, we advocate dictatorship and this is a dictatorship”. No, it's this is the “people's republic of...” and “German democratic republic” and so forth—so they are inventing new terms like managed democracy or sovereign democracy—nothing new variational theme. Here's what I think. Some of you probably know Lorne Craner who's the president at the International Republican Institute, former assistant secretary for human rights. He had a nice formulation for this. He said to me recently, just according to what your saying, Michael. He said, “really, it's as if the thugs and dictators of the world are doing a weekly conference call these day. They say, the colored revolutions to look, cedar, orange, Ukraine—and they saw the power of soft power. NGOs, civil society, human rights, information technology, ipods, emails—they saw that the Slovaks who dumped Mechiar were helping the Serbs dump Milosevic. And then both of those are working with the Byelorussians to dump theirs—I means it's true, actually. It's a fantastic, vibrant, natural, spontaneous, organic network. It's as if, Lorne says, they observed all that, and said “bloody hell” this was effective, they didn't fire a shot, they mobilized the people, they found resonance in public opinion, that's important. And now we need countermeasures, we need to compare notes, and in that court of public opinion, we can always send in tanks and we can torture people, and we can send people to Siberia (which Putin still does) okay, hasn't given up on everything, he's eclectic—he's pragmatic, I guess you could say. But it's as if they said, but boy we're going to get a lot more done through very shrewd, sophisticated application of our own soft power techniques. Below the radar screen, indirect, with plausible deniability. Look with us and Russia I can tell you, as God as my witness, they're closing us out of business. And I can get a Russian representative here from the embassy I'm certain who would be well prepared to brief and say, “but Mr.

Gedren, on your license agreement, signed on October 1st, 1998—if you look at page 75 and we told you three times that you must dot this ‘i’, but you crossed the ‘i’, you didn’t dot the ‘i’, and we believe in rule of law. Don’t you believe in rule of law?” [laughter] Okay. What do we have to do? You know Diane Zelany my colleague just convened a terrific—I’m flattering everybody here—a terrific conference with freedom house, Ellen Bourke and others about three weeks ago, on the soft power techniques of authoritarian regimes going after civil society, going after broadcasts—and what can we learn because if they learn from the last round, we have to learn to—and it’s a moving target, and it’s an important subject.

MCGIFFERT: Thank you. Sir, in the corner—

LEWIS SIMONS: I’m Lewis Simons I’m writing a book on the Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism, specifically in Southeast Asia. I was interested in, if I got you right I think you said that what you’re doing is essentially what you did during the Cold War. Umm, in my own reporting, it’s obvious that Muslims all over the world are very suspect of this administration and its foreign policy in general, specifically in the Middle East. And I’m wondering, if you meant that? Are you doing the same thing you’ve always done? Or are you tailoring your efforts particularly vis-à-vis, your markets in Iraq and Afghanistan and Iran—and if so you could give us some sense of how. And if you have any sense of whether you’re really changing minds. Whether you’re making any—catching any sense of change as far as your listening audiences are concerned.

GEDMIN: That’s a great question. The trick, and this is my view—but I’m confident on my view so I’m going to share it with you. My view, and I don’t think this is different than the Cold War, the trick of surrogate broadcasting is that you have to have fine journalists, fine journalist leadership—who know these countries and know these languages, and I don’t know the 21 languages. And we have a terrific management team. Between us we know a couple a few—that’s no different than the Cold War. You got to have terrific journalists, terrific journalistic leadership—you have to make sure that they understand the basic moral compass and basic political and intellectual compass, and then you have to create space for them to find their own language to speak to their own people in their own country. Because the voice of Jeff Gedren, or the voice of President Clinton or President Bush or President whoever, is not the voice that’s going to resonate or make the case. It has to be, and there has to be space for this, and there’s risk in that. And remember I’m being very direct with you, remember these services—let me step back from the Cold War—it’s worth a quick digression. Because we won the Cold War and it’s uniformly broadcasting played a role—all the details seem unimportant now. Read Arch Puddington’s terrific book on the history of Radio-Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Good god what a mess. Okay? What great services and magnificent leadership, but what a mess. The Russian service, the Soviet service, filled with spies, anti-Semites, nationalists who hated communism but didn’t exactly love democracy, and were a little ambivalent about the United States at times, too. Tactical relationships, divisions, vanities, rivalries left and right. It is apparent, it is the nature of surrogate broadcasting. Second of all, with that very difficult puzzle you still must give them space to talk to their own people in their own way. And third of all, you can’t compose anything—it goes on

point two. I'll give you an example. I'm going to kind of go out on a limb here because I don't even know what the answer to the question is myself, we have pretty intense editorial meetings. I had Afghans, great service reporting to me recently about a case and the Afghan press, about a fellow accused of blasphemy sentenced to death. And good heavens, there the debate begins. Well, do we have a position on the death penalty [at] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty—the answer is no. Does the Afghan service mandate or demand that women have positions and feelings about the death penalty quite evidently yes. And then on the subject of blasphemy, they laid out a rich argument for me on how terrible complicated this debate is. Not arguing against what we stand for, unapologetically—transparency, due process, legal representation, but they laid out for me a very complicated place—which really result in the conclusion its not—there's no one-size-fits-all—not in the Middle East. There's no one size formula that fits all these cultures and all these cases where I can cookie-cutter it and say, Oh, blasphemy? Death penalty? Where he's the text. Go with that. Okay? It has to be a more nuanced approach without sacrificing the core principles, without sacrificing the fundamental terms of the organization. Now, in the Middle East you ask, are we successful? Gee, you know it's hard to measure. We poll as best we can. We do telephone polling, we do focused groups, and we have people who read our websites and listen to us. So first of all, is that a measure of success? Is that influencing the right way? You know, it's kind of hard to say, but that's some connectivity, that's some effect. In the focus groups, you take it with a grain of salt. We get regular consistent feedback that there is a constituency and certainly in the case of Iran, and we have a colleague from Iran here, certainly in the case of Iran for example that there is a constituency inside this country for what I would call decent accountable government, for what I would call a more liberal form, a more colored form, a more inclusive form, a more pluralistic form. Now, is that the American system? No. It's not a Japanese system either. It's probably not a West German parliamentary system either. But it's not the Mullah system and they're looking for space for ideas, their looking for space for information, they're looking for space for commentary, analysis, debate, illumination, and they're coming to us. But gee, is it getting traction? Are they suspicious that it might come from the United States? I think that's all true, too, at the same time.

MCGIFFERT: Thank you. Other questions? Over here, in the corner?

INNOKENTY GREKOV [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom]: Hi, Innokenty Grekov. Since it's Valentines day, I feel an obligation to ask you a question about love [laughter]. I'm curious to hear your thoughts on yesterday's lower-backside kissing competition hosted by Mr. Putin, in the form of a press conference that lasted four hours. How do we undermine those journalists who are willing to sit around, and share a laugh with a person who is responsible for heavy persecution and prosecution of their colleagues. How do we do that?

GEDMIN: Where are you from? Okay, Okay. I like the spirit of the question, I'm not sure I understood the question. The question is, how do we...

INNOKENTY GREKOV: Yes undermine the work of those journalists who are willing to sit around for four hours and uh...

GEDMIN: Well yes, I don't know in that particular instance then, how to follow that. But, I'll tell you what we did. We're thinking a lot about our Russia services these days. We're thinking about when you don't have television and you don't have radio and you have internet, what is the content and programming. Let's give you an example. We went out and financed a bunch of fine papers by various people on what we do and how we can improve it. Ann Appleton from the Washington Post, Enders Wimbush from the Hudson institute, and Paul Quinn Judge wrote for the Guardian and Time Magazine now with the International Crisis Group. One thing they all came up with is to help create an alternative narrative, because there is an audience for an alternative narrative and they're not getting it. Make it credible, make it honest, make it accurate, make it fair-minded and let people know that the one thing they're getting on subject X from the monopolized media may have an alternative explanation or set of facts. So, that's one thing you can do. Look, you have to play in the game. And you have to keep chipping away.

MCGIFFERT: The Commission Report tries to be forward looking in looking at what the next administration could do differently or refigure some priorities and I'm wondering what your view is what should happen with USIA.

GEDMIN: I don't have a view. And, for a variety of reasons I'm not entering into that debate. I don't have a view, but it's a good debate.

MCGIFFERT: Are there any other questions? Okay. Questions in the back?

GEDMIN: I mean, I do have a view [laughter]

MCGIFFERT: Okay, good I'm glad.

GEDMIN: And I'm very weary of recreating USIA. And I'll tell you why—again, I'm a master of stating the obvious. This is coming from somebody who's not of the U.S. government—we actually are a 501C3, we're a grantee of the federal government, we're funded by Congress, but we have a certain measure of independence. I think, I'll put two propositions to you. Number one, good heavens, government—whether you reinstate USIA or not, must play a very important role in this ideas game, information game, war of ideas game, obviously—okay—and we have to keep retooling, refining and improving all the time, and that's your job, and you're doing a great job. But the problem, it seems to me, again it seems like we're stating the obvious again, the world has changed so dramatically and radically through technology in the last five, and ten, and twelve and fourteen years that the notion that even if you get the perfected bureaucracy with the best people that it's going to do the trick—it's not. It's past your game, it's like going from college to pro basketball, the court shrinks, the guys are taller, and slam dunks aren't important anymore because they can all do it. Okay? I mean, it seems, I mean I had a conversation once as an illustration a couple years ago. Dan Coats, Indiana senator, ambassador to Germany, I was in Berlin, I was director of the Aspen Institute. Dan Coats

said to me, you know—there's a piece on the front page, above the fold on the Tagesspiegel of causalities in Iraq, trumpeting how many innocent people Americans have killed, the data is not right, the spin they're putting on it is terribly far informed. And Dan Coats says, I need to as an ambassador rebut that immediately, I need a column in the paper the next day, but the State Department won't allow that—it's too slow, and all these checks and balances. So then, as I understand—Diane you can correct me, the State Department, Karen Hughes comes along and corrects that, streamlines it, gives it much more latitude to speed up the game, and so that's definitely important. You have to do that. That's a victory, but it's a limited victory—because before that paper even went to bed the night before the blogosphere was on a tear verily spreading like crazy all understating it, it's the Daniel Kimmage thing. If you've seen Kimmages report on how the Sunni Insurgents and Al Qaeda use the internet in Iraq, what do they do, they're not expensive. But they're small, they're nimble, they're fast, they're decentralized, they're fantastic when it comes to music, sound, imageries, symbols, and they're on a tear. They're on a tear. So, reinvent government, and get the right people. It's absolutely essential, don't misunderstand me. But we better starting thinking in creative and complementary ways outside of government speed really does kill. And, in this case, the best government institution in the world is just not going to keep up with this stuff not anymore.

MCGIFFERT: That leads me to my next question, and then we'll have a final question here, because we do have you for a few more minutes and we're going to keep you which is about new technologies and like your example from Bellerose where you have a citizen essentially giving a YouTube-type video. How else is your organization keeping up on new media and competing in the blogosphere as you say, where other organizations are moving fast.

GEDMIN: Everybody that everybody else knows and what they're doing. Blogging is important to us, and I think you know as well as I do that it's not blogging it's the blogger. There are ample numbers of blogs, it's not the blog, it's the blogger. Get a smart person with a forcible personality, with something to say, with passion, with articulate things, he or she can develop authority, a following. We do SMS messaging. We're hoping more and more as technologies develop in our countries that people will be able to download things as they do here with podcasts, anything and everything that gets it out there faster. I had a friend who came back from Iraq recently, he was in northern Iraq/Kurdistan. He said to me, everywhere he went, Bus stop, café, restaurant office, everybody was using their cell phone for video contact. He said they were watching two things—pornography, and jihadist websites. That was what was in, that was what was cool, that's what people were laughing about, telling stories about—you have to be in that market.

MCGIFFERT: Thank you. And the final question from the gentleman, right here.

SHALOU MOLEAN(SP?): Thank you very much. My name is Shalou Molean. I work with Chevron and I am a Nigerian. In your about half an hour of presentation you mentioned Africa just one time, and I asked your colleague here if you covered Africa

and you he said no. I think it's within the rights of U.S. Congress and Radio Liberty to determine its area of coverage. In town here, there's a lot of discussion is dominated by China, Middle East, geopolitics of Iran, Iraq and all of them and that—and there's a controversy surrounding the creation of Africa because, for many many years that continent has been neglected, sidelined—but the fundamentalism that exists in the Middle East it will exist in some countries in Africa or it can be transported to some countries in Africa. Is there a reason why Africa is not covered by your radio station?

GEDMIN: Well first of all I like this man. First of all, Voice of America, there is access or coverage of Africa. My group, Radio-Free Europe/Radio Liberty is not. Why, well history had us projecting to Cold War countries in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, it just was what it was by virtue of the fact the Soviet Union was there and East Germany and the Soviet Bloc was there and Congress was in that part. I am personally interested, and I have a colleague representing the board—don't throw a sponge at me, but you know, I happen to adore surrogate broadcasting. I enjoy Voice of America and other services too their complimentary, they are mutually reinforcing. You know, you can't live without one or the other, but I personally believe that there's a very compelling case for more surrogate broadcasting. And you said it best, including in your country you know better than I, it's not just philanthropy, it's the strategic interest of the United States. And just to mention the one issue you brought up, when you think about Al Qaeda, and you think about the spread of Islamic extremism, it's not localized in the Middle East, we know that. And we know about Yemen and we know about Somalia and we know about your country a little bit. And so, you know, with me you're pushing on an open door, and if you want to give me your card and we'll visit our board and we'll stop by Congress and we're ready to do business. Thank you.

MCGIFFERT: Great, well I want to thank you so much for everything you've talked about, and the mission of your organization is very much in the spirit of the work of the Smart Power commission and the ongoing work that CSIS is doing in this area. So we're really delighted and honored to have you here today, thank you very much.

GEDMIN: Thank you, my pleasure.