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Karen Hughes' Appointment as Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy
April 12, 2005
by Amelia H. Arsenault

On March 14, 2005, Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice announced that President George W. Bush intends to nominate his long time friend and senior advisor, Karen Hughes as Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy. According to Rice, if the Senate confirms Hughes' appointment, "she will undertake a broad review and restructuring of [American] public diplomacy efforts."

Hughes' nomination coincided closely with two controversial presidential appointments: Undersecretary of State, John Bolton as Ambassador to the United Nations and US Deputy Defense Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz as the head of the World Bank. Thus coverage and commentary about Hughes' appointment has been largely subsumed by broader discussions about Bush's decision to appoint three "Bush insiders" to such high profile foreign policy positions.

For the most part, press and political pundits alike herald Hughes' appointment as a sign of the Bush administration's commitment to bolstering American public diplomacy. However, they remain divided about Hughes' foreign policy experience and her ability to adequately address American credibility issues abroad.

Less controversial is the fact that Hughes' deputy at the State Department will be Dina Powell, currently White House head of personnel. Powell, who was born in Egypt and moved to the United States when she was four, stands out as one of the few upper-level U.S. diplomats fluent in Arabic.

The following is an aggregation of key articles and commentary about Hughes' nomination.

Advice to Bush: Image Improvement is Achieved by Policies, Not by Propaganda

(Ahmad Mahir, Former Egyptian Foreign Minister, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, April 1, 2005)

"The United States then resorted to appointing a media expert, close to President Bush and his ideology, who is responsible for "polishing and embellishing" (the US image). She is assisted by an expert of Egyptian origin who also used to work at the White House. All agree that (US State Department Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy) Karen Hughes and her assistant are held in high esteem, but they are like two skilful swimmers trying to swim in a cavernous tsunami."

(Full text Translation available on LexisNexis)

Karen Hughes: Extreme World Makeover

(David Corn, *Globalpolicy.Org*, March 31, 2005)

Corn, a columnist for the Nation, warns that, “as a White House aide, [Karen Hughes] used P.R. tactics, not the truth, to push Bush's reckless policies. Now she'll do the same concerning the United States' image abroad. (If she could sell Bush to the American voters, maybe she can sell dirt as food.)”
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/empire/media/2005/0315hughes.htm>

Memo To: Karen Hughes

(Robert Satloff, *Weekly Standard*, March 28, 2005)

Writes Satloff, “Congratulations on your nomination as undersecretary of state for public diplomacy. Though this is a third-level State Department appointment, with an office about a half-mile away from your former prime spot in the West Wing of the White House, it is actually one of the most important jobs in the U.S. government. Like the generals in charge of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the intelligence chiefs running the global war on terror, you will now be in charge of fighting the "battle of ideas.””

<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/005/380tnujk.asp>

Cheer Up, Karen Hughes. Your Job is Not Quite Impossible

(Jonathan Rauch, *National Journal*, March 25, 2005)

Rauch cautions, “don't get too cheerful, Ms. Hughes. The man who in 2004 seized upon his opponent's use of the phrase "global test" to mock the very idea of multilateralism will not change his spots in 2005. But he may change his tactics. He can be offensive to foreign sensibilities, but he can also be charming, as he proved in Europe. Your job, Ms. Hughes, is to encourage his charm offensive.”

<http://nationaljournal.com/members/buzz/2005/socialstudies/032505.htm>

Washington Diary: Bush's Disciples Given Mission to Convert World

(Julian Borger, *Guardian Weekly*, March 25, 2005)

“So much for the honeymoon. The promise of diplomacy and dialogue, the tours of Europe by George Bush and Condoleezza Rice, all suggested a kinder, gentler second Bush term. Any embryonic thoughts that the world view from the White House had changed, however, have been dispelled by three stunning appointments over the past two weeks.”

(Available on LexisNexis)

Bush's Nomination of Hughes and Wolfowitz Main Issues in US Press

(William Fisher, *Aljazeera.info*, March 21, 2005)

This guest editorial, by Fisher a journalist for the Jordan Times highlights the “mixed reactions from the US press and leaders in the American foreign policy community” to Hughes' appointment.”

<http://www.aljazeera.info/Opinion%20editorials/2005%20Opinion%20Editorials/March/21%20o/Bush's%20nomination%20of%20Hughes%20and%20Wolfowitz%20main%20issues%20in%20US%20press%20William%20Fisher.htm>

Rice and Hughes Will Make A Formidable Team

(Herbert Klein, *American Enterprise Institute*, March 21, 2005)

Rice as the strategist and Hughes as the communicator can be counted upon to be assertive as they attempt to build the reputation of the United States in hostile Muslim nations. They are powerful women who understand the mind of the president better than anyone else, with the exception of his wife and possibly Karl Rove. Their weapons will be built with communication, not by troops. In years past, the

selection of two women to undertake the gigantic challenge dealing with Muslim nations would have been unthinkable. But the truth is that it would be difficult to find individuals of either sex more capable than these two charming but tough-minded women.

http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all.pubID.22152/pub_detail.asp

The Hughes Doctrine – Opinion

(Bob Mann, *New York Times*, March 21, 2005)

Mann, Hughes' journalism professor at Southern Methodist University in Denver in 1976, analyzes Hughes' coursework in his class to illustrate that, "as a journalism student in the heart of Texas, Karen Hughes was composing what has become the Bush doctrine."

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FB081FF835580C728EDDAA0894DD404482&incamp=archive:search>

The Problem is not in the Image

(*Tishrin Times*, Syria, March 17, 2005)

"Bush usually seeks Hughes's help in difficult situations and she does not disappoint him. Dina Powell, meanwhile, is of Arab origin and speaks Arabic. She is charismatic and experienced and known for her absolute frankness, as White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card has put it. She is known for not being afraid of expressing her view, even if it contradicts Bush's opinion. However, the appointment of these two ladies will not be enough to achieve the goal of improving the US Administration's image among the Arabs, because the fault lies not in the image, but in the essence of the US policy. This policy is based on aggression, occupation, racism, dictating and flagrant bias towards Israel, which entails violation of international laws and charters regarding "freedom and democracy", the slogan of Bush's second presidency."

(Available on LexisNexis)

Selling America: Another Lady With A Tough Job

(*The Economist*, March 17, 2005)

According to the Economist, "her nomination reveals two important things about the Bush administration's second term. First, Mr Bush is serious in his effort to use American "soft power" to change the Arab world. As he said, the choice of Mrs. Hughes, "signifies my personal commitment to the international diplomacy that is needed". He does not want to be remembered only as a warrior president. Second, the State Department has become the centre of his second-term ambition."

http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=3773231

Secretary of Spin? – Opinion

(Richard Cohen, *Washington Post*, March 17, 2005)

Hughes, once a counselor to the president and always an intimate, represents an administration that values truth only in the abstract. In its day-to-day dealings with the American people, it has the ethical approach of a slippery door-to-door salesman -- anything to make the sale. Until the Bush administration vows to become more forthright, the Senate ought to put the Hughes nomination in mothballs.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A42187-2005Mar16?language=printer>

Job No. 1: U.S. Image Makeover

(Cam Simpson, *Chicago Tribune*, March 16, 2005)

“Though she lacks diplomatic experience and expertise in the Muslim or Arab world, insiders and outsiders alike said that Hughes, who would be the third person to hold the post since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, may have the one qualification that matters most--clout.”
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0503150235mar15,1,2904224.story?coll=chi-newsnationworld-hed&ctrack=2&cset=true>

Can Karen Hughes Help Us Image Abroad?

(Linda Feldman, *Christian Science Monitor*, March 16, 2005)

“Karen Hughes's new Washington assignment - to improve America's image abroad - may be the ultimate test of loyalty to a president who seems to value that trait almost above all else. Reaction around town to Ms. Hughes's nomination as undersecretary of State for public diplomacy centered on one theme: its improbability.”
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0316/p03s01-usfp.html>

Marketing America

(*PBS Newshour*, March 16, 2005)

In this special segment, Terence Smith and guests discuss Hughes' nomination and the progress of the U.S. public diplomacy campaign. Guests include: Senator Richard Lugar, Republican of Indiana, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Shibley Telhami, professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland and author of "The Stakes," about U.S policy in the Middle East; and Harold Pachios, a four-term member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy.
Transcript: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june05/hughes_3-16.html

Ultimate Bush Insider Joins Rice at State Department

(Jim Lobe, *IPS*, March 15, 2005)

“The decision to put Hughes, who, along with Karl Rove, has been Bush's closest political adviser since he first ran for Texas governor in the early 1990s, under Condoleezza Rice at the State Department took insiders by surprise. It suggested that Rice is building a major power centre at Foggy Bottom, one that is capable of ensuring that she can penetrate the circle of foreign-policy hard-liners led by Vice President Dick Cheney and bolstered by national security adviser Stephen Hadley, and his deputy, J.D. Crouch, any time she wants.”
<http://www.ipsnews.net/print.asp?idnews=27868>

America's Ambassador to the World

(David Frum, *National Post*, Canada, March 15, 2005)

The appointment of this intimate counselor as, in effect, Bush's ambassador to the world signifies that public diplomacy will -- at last -- receive the attention it deserves. The Bush administration has not consistently done a good job explaining itself to the rest of the world, and for this failure, the United States has paid a heavy price. Hughes's arrival on the job constitutes a major statement of presidential rededication to the job of global communication. The new undersecretary -- who is incidentally also an extremely close friend of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice -- will have the President's ear and the power to get things done.

(Available on LexisNexis)

White House Briefing on Karen Hughes' Appointment the White House

(Briefing By Scott McClellan, March 15, 2005)

According to McClellan, Hughes “is someone who has been very effective in the past, and she is someone who has been a member of the Afghan Women's Council, and worked to support the rights of women in Afghanistan and free them from their past of oppression. We have stated very clearly that when it comes to promoting democracy, it's important to protect the rights of all -- that means minorities, that means women. And that remains our position. She is someone who is a proven communicator, and someone who has some real, practical foreign policy experience that she can bring to our public diplomacy efforts.

<http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/vp01.cfm?outfit=pmt&requesttimeout=500&folder=2053&paper=2214>

Lugar Statement on Karen Hughes

(Senator Richard Lugar, March 14, 2005)

“I applaud the President’s nomination of Karen Hughes to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Ms. Hughes will bring the strategic orientation required for this vital responsibility. She is close to the President and she has significant national campaign communications experience. “The United States is involved in an international strategic communications campaign to promote and defend American interests in the world. Public diplomacy is a national security issue, and I believe Karen Hughes will bring to this job the wisdom and energy essential for this critical challenge.”

<http://lugar.senate.gov/pressapp/record.cfm?id=233440>

Analysis: Hughes Tapped for Top Diplomatic Post

(Michele Keleman, *All Things Considered* , March 14, 2005)

“Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has promised to put a new emphasis on public diplomacy, and today she announced that job will fall to Karen Hughes, best known for helping President Bush craft his messages for domestic audiences.” Transcript available on LexisNexis.

Listen to the Report here: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4534685>

Bush Picks Adviser to Repair Tarnished U.S. Image Abroad - Elisabeth Bumiller

(*New York Times* , March 12)

Ms. Hughes, who has been a major influence in producing the message Mr. Bush presents to the public, will now tackle what administration officials say is the extremely difficult job of selling the United States and its policies to the world after the anger over the American-led invasion of Iraq. Two previous under secretaries for public diplomacy have resigned, and the job has been vacant since last summer. A series of reports by government experts, including the independent commission on the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, and by outside foundations have harshly criticized the administration’s attempts to improve America’s image overseas. The new secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, has said that public diplomacy -- a term that encompasses press and public relations, cultural exchanges and information programs -- is an urgent concern.

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F10E15F83F580C718DDDA0894DD404482>