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# P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E

**T**he past year has been many things, but it has hardly been tranquil or uneventful. Even a cursory list of developments over the past twelve months would include the London terrorist bombings; narrow congressional passage of the Central American Free Trade Agreement; ongoing diplomatic



*President Richard N. Haass*

efforts against the backdrop of genocide in western Sudan; vast changes in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Authority as a result of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, followed by an unexpected Hamas victory at the Palestinian polls; announcement of a new six-party agreement designed to terminate North Korea's nuclear program in exchange for security guarantees and a mix of political and economic benefits for Pyongyang; the signing of a strategically significant but also controversial U.S.-India accord on civilian nuclear cooperation; the decision by Bolivia's new leftist government to nationalize its energy resources; the emergence of new leadership in Germany and Italy; the resumption of U.S.-Libyan diplomatic ties; and the price of oil rising to more than \$70 per barrel, a level that translated into gasoline's costing around \$3 per gallon. Dominating the headlines this year were two additional issues: the re-

ality of intermittent political progress but continuing deadly violence in Iraq, and a gathering international storm surrounding Iran's attempts to enrich uranium and, possibly, develop nuclear weapons.

These and other issues create both opportunities and obligations for the Council. The good news is that the Council is ready for both. I inherited a remarkable institution from Leslie H. Gelb when I began as Council president in 2003. My challenge over the past three years has been to make it even better. As I stated in last year's Annual Report, we will work to do this by focusing on our core missions of making each member's experience a satisfying one and by serving as a resource for foreign policy practitioners, including senior government officials, prominent journalists, and members of Congress and their staffs. We have also begun something quite new: reaching out to those people whose voices are critical to the foreign policy challenges faced by this country but who have mostly been absent from the foreign policy debate—college and university educators and students, religious and congregational leaders, and state and local officials.

Before I expand on outreach, let me briefly discuss the work we are doing to fulfill our core missions. Programming for our membership—life, term, and corporate—remains a Council priority. The New York and Washington programs offer members a compelling array of events, from distinguished single-

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speaker meetings and film screenings to book club sessions and series such as “Iraq: The Way Forward.” In conjunction with the Studies Program, the New York Meetings Program convened half- and full-day symposia on such timely foreign policy challenges as homeland security, Iran’s nuclear program, and rising Shia power. Our National Program organized more than 130 events and conference calls in the past year, and our Term Member Program consistently produces a vibrant calendar of meetings and trips for the Council’s close to 500 term members. Corporate programming for the more than 250 corporate members is equally strong; the second annual Corporate Conference in March received rave reviews.

The Council’s think tank continues to produce an impressive array of high-quality work, from Council Special Reports to books and articles written by Council fellows. The Independent Task Force program is thriving, with recent releases on Russia, Africa, and post-conflict capabilities. *Foreign Affairs* has



President George W. Bush and Council President Richard N. Haass.



Jean-Claude Trichet, president of the European Central Bank, Robert D. Hormats, vice chairman of Goldman Sachs International, and Thomas R. Keene, editor-at-large of Bloomberg News.



Suzanne McDonough; Maurice R. Greenberg, chairman and CEO of C. V. Starr and Council Board member; and William J. McDonough, vice chairman and special adviser to the chairman of Merrill Lynch.



*Former President Jimmy Carter, Council Honorary Chairman David Rockefeller, and Council President Richard N. Haass.*

published a series of pivotal articles on Iraq, pandemic flu, and China. Through the efforts of the Washington Program, these and other Council products are increasingly reaching policymakers in the executive branch, on Capitol Hill, and within the diplomatic community. Likewise, our Communications Department held numerous dedicated press briefings drawing on the expertise and experience of Council fellows, staff, and project directors this year, further enhancing our ability to serve as a resource for the news media.

Much of this activity translated into impact. The *Foreign Affairs* issue on pandemic flu, distributed widely in Asia, was credited with drawing the attention of local elites to the risk of an outbreak. The Independent Task Force on Africa was the foundation document of the National Intelligence Council's annual Africa conference. The Russia Task Force was cited in a *New York Times* editorial urging the Bush administration to "heed the report's advice." The Department of Defense adopted one of the central recommendations of the Independent Task Force

on Post-Conflict Capabilities: to establish stability operations as a "strategic priority for the armed forces" and to put it on a level with war-fighting. The agenda outlined by the Independent Task Force on the Future of North America, to ensure the continued integration of the United States, Mexico, and Canada, was largely adopted by the 2005 and 2006 Trilateral Summits.

It is not enough, however, for us to be a resource solely for the Council's traditional constituencies. Our new outreach initiative—to academics, religious leaders, and state and local officials—enables us to serve as a resource for these communities, as well as to increase the Council's familiarity with the perspectives of these important groups. Current outreach efforts include specialized conference call series, dissemination of select on-the-record events via webcast and teleconference, and customized bulletins featuring relevant Council events and publications. The redesigned CFR.org, with 108 percent more unique visitors in April 2006 than in April 2005, has fast become the premier public resource for information on and analysis of foreign policy. With a special "For Educators" section and other targeted sections in the works, CFR.org will also enhance our outreach efforts.

The initial response to these new Council outreach initiatives has been positive. Fifty-seven universities participated in our 2005–2006 Academic Conference Call Series. Approximately 300 individuals and organizations, including national health associations, state departments of public health, universities, and student health and wellness centers, joined the webcast



*David M. Rubenstein, cofounder and managing director of the Carlyle Group and Council Board member, and Michael H. Jordan, chairman and CEO of Electronic Data Systems.*

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*Bono, activist and lead singer of the rock group U2 (far right), meets with (clockwise from right foreground) James D. Wolfensohn, Tom Brokaw, Steven L. Rattner, Leon D. Black, Richard N. Haass, David Rockefeller, Jeffrey A. Rosen, and Peter G. Peterson.*

of our conference on pandemic flu. Religious leaders have joined webcasts and teleconferences of Council events, including a meeting with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the launch of the report of the Independent Task Force on Africa.

I could go on, but won't. Council meetings end on time and it seems only fitting that I should keep this letter brief as well. I am excited about what we have accomplished in the past three years and even more

excited about our potential to accomplish more in the years ahead for our members, for our traditional constituents, and for those we are now reaching out to for the first time. This, too, is a good thing, since the need for an independent, nonpartisan Council—be it as a venue, as a publisher, or as the sponsor of new ideas—has never been greater.

*Richard N. Haass*  
President



*Council Board member Laura D'Andrea Tyson.*



*International Advisory Board members Syed Babar Ali, Khalid A. Alturki, and Khebla Shubane.*