Press Release:

Security Task Force  
The 2007 U.S.-Islamic World Forum in Doha, Qatar

Participants at the Security Task Force at the 2007 U.S. Islamic World Forum, a global leaders’ conference hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar and the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, met in two sessions to discuss the impact of the names and descriptions that we use on U.S. – Islamic relations, as well as the impact of the U.S. presence in and potential withdrawal from Iraq. Dr. Peter W. Singer chaired the Task Force. Today’s session included presentations by M.J. Akbar, David Belt, Marc Lynch as well as Kenneth Pollack and Jalal al-Din al-Sagheer. The final session of the Task Force taking place tomorrow will be addressed by Rami Khouri and Philip Gordon.

In the first session of the task force, which focused on the names and descriptions that we use to refer to the current conflicts, participants emphasized that while terminology is important in public diplomacy, they are grounded in realities on the ground, which must be addressed for relations between the U.S. and Muslim World to improve.

The second session focusing on Iraq highlighted that an American presence is both part of the problem and part of the solution. In the short term, an immediate withdrawal would push Iraq into chaos and in the long term responsibilities must be transferred to the democratically elected Iraqi parliament and government. In addition, the United States and the Iraqi government must find political legitimacy for their policies in Iraq.

The effect of a potential civil war with spill-over effects into neighboring countries sparked a vivid debate among participants, specifically with regard to a preventive containment strategy and the flow of refugees, which may contribute to the spread of conflict. While some laid out strategies for containment involving international and U.S. involvement, others advocated a regional or bilateral approach of preventing civil war in Iraq. Given the central stage that Iraq occupies in the current debate, participants also urged that other conflicts, such as Darfur, are not forgotten.

About the U.S.-Islamic World Forum: The 2007 U.S.- Islamic World Forum is a global conference bringing together American and Muslim world political, business, media, civil society, science, arts and cultural leaders. The Forum seeks to serve as both a convening body for American and Muslim world leaders and as a catalyst for promoting more positive relations between the U.S. and Muslim states and communities. The theme of the 2007 Forum is “Confronting What Divides Us.” The U.S.-Islamic World Forum has quickly established itself as the premiere meeting ground for serious engagement between American and Muslim world leaders.

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For more on the U.S.-Islamic World Forum:  
www.qatar-conferences.org/usislamic2007

For more on the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World:  
http://www.brookings.edu/ip/research/projects/islam_islam.htm