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**From:** McHale, Judith A <McHaleJA@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 5, 2011 8:02 AM  
**To:** H  
**Cc:** Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J; Abedin, Huma; Burns, William J  
**Subject:** Tunisia

Included below is an update on the Tunisia Transition Team which NEA prepared [redacted] [redacted] As you will note we have made significant progress in a relatively short period of time. Of particular note is our engagement with, and support for, the media. Among other things we have begun a series of weekly DVCs with prominent journalists from around the world. We also plan to set up regular briefings with USG officials on a broad cross-section of issues. I will be reaching out to a number of US journalism schools, including [redacted] at Columbia, to see if we can establish a formal linkage with the primary J-school in Tunis. Finally we are also looking for ways to engage leading US media law experts to help create the legal framework to support a free and independent media environment.

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I am working with Jose Fernandez and his team to jump start the economic development component of the plan and hope to have someone on the ground in Tunis before I leave.

Based on initial results I think the concept of a surge team focused on expanded engagement across civil society is one that we might consider in a variety of other circumstances. It allows us to rapidly respond to the urgent needs of a broad range of civil society actors and organizations, leverage a number of our existing programs, engage a broader cross-section of non-government US actors and gain favorable recognition of our efforts from sectors who might previously have held negative attitudes towards the US. The key to success is support from the top and strong leadership on the ground. Much remains to be done but hopefully we have laid a good foundation and provided a useful road map for moving forward.

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## **Update on the Tunisia Transition Engagement Support Team**

### Team Background

Under the direction of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Judith McHale, the State Department established a Transition Engagement Support Team in April-May 2011 that provides focused support in country and in Washington, and that is part of our strategy to ensure that we quickly mobilize resources and deeply engage with the Tunisian government and

people, especially in the months before elections. The team is being headed by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Greta Holtz.

Focus areas and leads for the Support Team priority areas are as follows:

- **Democracy and Elections (Vanessa Brown, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor)**—Focused full-time on civil society outreach, to make the connections between as many civil society groups (as many outside Tunis as possible) and the USG, and to coordinate with European and other missions on civil society outreach primarily in the areas of political party development, voter education, training for Tunisian election monitors, and strengthening the rule of law.
- **Business and Entrepreneurship (TBD, Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs)**— The EEB coordinator will focus on strengthening professional associations, connecting Tunisian businesses with American businesspeople, enhancing internship and apprenticeship opportunities for young Tunisians, and forging partnerships that will create jobs. This effort will fall under the ongoing job creation and entrepreneurship activities of the U.S.-North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity (NAPEO), a part of the Secretary's Partnership for a New Beginning (PNB).
- **Media (Ana Escrogima, Bureau of Public Affairs)**—Focused on capacity building for media (traditional and new) including elections coverage training, engagement with media executives, and coordinating exchange with foreign journalists.
- **Education (Suzanne Hall, Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs)**—Focused on improving and broadening access to English language instruction, scholarships, and scholarly journals and material. Will also expand American Corners, dedicated information spaces hosted in schools, libraries, and other partner institutions worldwide that help introduce visitors to the story of the United States.

### Activity Update

**Democracy and Elections:** DRL plans to send a representative in July to coordinate Embassy Tunis and other partners on the ground on civil society outreach, primarily in the areas of political party development, voter education, training for Tunisian election monitors, transitional justice and strengthening the rule of law.

**Business and Entrepreneurship:** Within the coming weeks, EEB will send a project coordinator to Tunisia to participate in the surge team to support and accelerate economic programming and outreach to local stakeholders.

**Media:** The team in Tunisia has focused on capacity building for traditional and new media, including training on elections coverage, engagement with media executives, and coordinating exchange with foreign journalists.

- On May 31, the team kicked off the first of its weekly series called "Journalism Dialogue on Elections Reporting" with renowned MBC journalist Nadia Bilbassy Charters.

Feedback from participants, especially women, was overwhelmingly positive. For ten days in June, American journalist Elizabeth Bryant will lead an in-depth training in French to print and radio journalists that will focus on political news reporting. The team has also identified a wide range of training partners: the Tunisian Agence Presse (TAP); Institute de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information (IPSI), Tunisia's only journalism faculty; the African Center for Journalist Training (CAPJC); and the Arab Institute for Training.

- The team is connecting local NGO partners with expert U.S. and international organization to find ways to collaborate on media monitoring/engagement training and on changing the legal framework of Tunisia's media in light of the political transition.

**Education:** The team is focused on improving and broadening access to English language instruction, scholarships, scholarly journals and online educational material. The team is working on:

- **American Corner:** The Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) and the Support Team are reviewing partners who can host an American Corner and provide free access to multi-media resources to students, teachers and ordinary citizens in Sfax, Tunisia's second populous city with 931,000 inhabitants. IIP will work with the PAS Tunis to establish interactive multi-media collections with three other institutions of higher learning and upgrade the information resources at the American Corner in the important regional city Sousse.
- **Mobile English:** A draft Letter of Intent (LOI) is being created to establish a partnership between the USG and Tunisia's largest telecommunication company to make available mobile English language lessons and mobile civic education to its subscriber base. USG will pay for the company's six million subscribers to access the mobile content for free for the first ninety days, after which users will be charged a nominal fee.
- **Virtual Exchange:** The team has expanded the embassy's network of local partners and audiences to create a series of exchanges between Tunisian and American youth through organizations in the Exchange 2.0 community. Global Nomads Group ran their first Skype conversation between ACCESS exchange students at AMIDEAST in Sousse and American high school students in California on Friday, May 27. Participants in both countries raved about the experience and have connected via Facebook with an eagerness to continue friendships and to learn more about each others' languages and cultures. The team also introduced Soliya (a non-profit, Exchange 2.0 organization that promotes dialogue between Muslim and American youth using new media) to AMIDEAST Tunisia and the Ministry of Higher Education to explore a longer term partnership connecting Tunisian and American university students around key themes of interest.

- **Fulbright:** In academic year 2011-2012, Tunisia will have a total of four U.S. Fulbright scholars, two of whom were recently added upon the recommendation of the Support Team. ECA is also working to identify a U.S. student to do research in Tunisia. ECA can send a team of up to 10 U.S. Fulbright specialists for a shorter term to consult and conduct a needs assessment (pending a request from post).
- **American Shelves:** IIP is developing a series of English language book donations (American Shelves) for institutions of higher education, including the University of Sfax Department of Letters, the Higher Institute of Languages in Tunis, and the Higher Institute of Technology in Sfax. The American Window in Sousse, run through AMIDEAST, will be upgraded with new resources before its expansion to a new facility this summer.
- **University Linkages:** The Transition Team is working with PAS Tunis to use FY-2011 ESF funds (\$275,000) to seed longer-term exchange programs to enable a small group of students to gain exposure to the U.S. media environment, to provide a mini-internship experience, and to purchase TV studio equipment to replace IPSI's aging set from the 1960s.
- **Maghreb Virtual Library (MVL):** Embassy Tunis and IIP continue to work with Civilian Research & Development Foundation (CRDF) to bring the MVL to institutions of higher learning. CRDF had successful meetings with local stakeholders, including the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education, to strategize partnerships for and implementation of the MVL.