

Under Secretary Hughes and Ambassador Timken Press Conference in Nürnberg prior to the World Cup Soccer Match USA vs. Ghana

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Karen Hughes: I hope a lot of them will choose to come and study in America, and we'll have a lot of different scholarships available. Uh, they're here on what is called one of our visitor programs. Our embassies around the world work with local soccer organizations in their countries to select young people that they jointly felt would be good representatives of their countries and that would be interested in traveling to America and participating in this program. So our embassies worked with local soccer clubs, local soccer organizing committees in each country. We very much hope that - one of the things my office also oversees in addition to youth exchanges is student exchanges and things like Fulbright scholarships. And we have a lot of different scholarships available. We WANT young people from across the world to come to America, and we want them to know that there was some difficulty for some time after September 11th, sometimes in getting student visas, and in most places in the world we've now really improved the process, so we want young people to come to America to study, we're a very welcoming country. We also want our young Americans to travel around the world. One of the things I've told my own son and I tell young people across America is that we need to do a better job as Americans of learning about the world and of learning about other countries, learning to speak other languages, learning about other cultures. And so we want to foster more and more of these types of two-way exchanges, so we'd love it if some of these young people want to come back and study in America, and I hope they will.

Question: I'm from TBA. I've got a question regarding the soccer enthusiasm in the US government. We just heard that you're a soccer mum, and I would like to know whether ... well, the leadership in the us knows that we have a World Cup here, and whether they might come over to watch a game.

Karen Hughes: Well, yes, in fact President Bush spoke with members of our team, placed a call, I don't know if he spoke to them individual or was there a team meeting when he phoned the team though, right, so he phoned our members of our team at a team meeting before the beginning of the World Cup to wish them our best and to tell them that America is rooting for them and watching. Myself I've been traveling around the world since the World Cup started I was at the embassy in Prague. Our ambassador, the American ambassador in Prague had a huge party, a watching party, and invited Americans as well as, as people in the Czech Republic to come and watch the very first game. I watched the second game at my home in Austin, Texas with some friends and my husband.

I you asked about soccer interest in America, it's really, you know, soccer is the world's sport. And America is learning to love soccer. When I went to school, I didn't know anyone who played soccer. When my son went to school, all his friends started playing soccer. And so, in fact I was sharing with someone earlier today that when my son signed up to play soccer at the age of five, we, my husband and I checked the box that said we'd be glad to volunteer to help if, if they needed us, and they called us the night before the first practice and said, would you be the coaches [laughs] and so ... And at that point we hadn't been to a soccer game, and so my husband bought a book, and he knows a lot about sports, he's a baseball player, and so he learned the sport and learned to love the sport of soccer. And my husband and son actually attended a World Cup game in in Texas, in Dallas in 1994, when when the United States hosted the World Cup. I did not get to go that year, because uh, our current President was at the time running for governor of Texas, and I was in the campaign trail with him, and I was working, so I didn't get to go to the games, so I'm just thrilled that I finally get to attend my first World Cup game here in Germany today.

Question: Secretary. My name is Martin Dewer(???) from the local newspaper — Nürnberg Nachrichten, and I'd like to see, looking at the lists of the all the countries where these kids come from, where you can see that most of them are from Muslim countries. So my question is: is that pure coincidence, or is there some kind of message behind this?

Karen Hughes: Well, many of the young people here are from countries with a majority Muslim population, some of them are not, some are from Latin America, some are from other parts of the world. A big part of my focus is to reach out to the Muslim world and the Islamic communities throughout the world, to try to foster a greater understanding between America, and people of the varied Muslim communities across the world. But I have other priorities as well. President Bush asked me to work to strengthen the transatlantic partnership which I'm quick... he was just here with us yesterday, with Secretary Rice. He also asked me to be mindful that Latin America, our neighborhood in our own hemisphere is a very important priority, and so, um, we actually, on this program I think we reached out through our embassies to find out who has the most interest in this program, and that's how they decided. But a big part of my job IS to reach out to the many countries around the world that have significant Muslim population

Speaker: Another question?

Karen Hughes: Nobody else? Thank you all so for being here, I really appreciate it! [applause]