

**Panel: The Middle East Press in the United States, Monday, November 17, 2008,
Kuwait Cultural Center, Washington, D.C.**

The panel will provide the AUSACE audience with an overview of coverage of U.S. news for a Middle East audience, as well as in some cases, coverage of the Middle East news for a U.S. audience. The discussion will examine coverage priorities and challenges for these news organizations. The outcome of the U.S. presidential election and its impact on the Middle East will also be a focus for discussion. The panel will include:

William Rugh, moderator, is former ambassador to Yemen and former ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. Rugh was a career Foreign Service Officer for 31 years, from 1964-1995. He had several assignments abroad for the U.S. Information Agency, serving as public affairs officer in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In Washington, he was assistant director of USIA for the Near East, North Africa and South Asia from 1989-1992, having served in that same bureau 1971-1972 as senior policy officer and again from 1973-1976 as deputy for Near East and North Africa. He received the Murrow Award for Excellence in Public Diplomacy in 1991, and received Presidential Awards for Meritorious Service three times.

His foreign service assignments abroad also include one as Deputy Chief of Mission, at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus 1981-1984, and two as Ambassador: to the Yemen Arab Republic from 1984-1987 and to the United Arab Emirates from 1992-1995.

After retiring from the U.S. Foreign Service, he served from 1995 until 2003 as president and CEO of America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST), an American non-governmental organization that promotes understanding between Americans and peoples of the Middle East through education and training, with offices in a dozen Arab countries. He is now a consultant to AMIDEAST and a member of the Executive Committee of its Board.

He is also a trustee of the American University in Cairo, a member of the Suffolk University International Board of Advisors, and an adjunct scholar at the Middle East Institute.

Rugh holds an M.A. in International Relations from Johns Hopkins and a Ph.D in government from Columbia University. Between 1987 and 1989 he was adjunct professor at the Fletcher School of Tufts University, where he taught courses in public diplomacy and U.S. Middle East policy. He is the author of a number of books, book chapters, articles, and commentary on issues relating to the Middle East and to public diplomacy. His books include *Diplomacy and Defense Policy of the United Arab Emirates* (2002), *Arab Mass Media* (2004) and *American Encounters with Arabs: the "Soft Power" of U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab World*, (2005). His articles have appeared in the *Middle East Journal*, *Middle East Policy*, the Carnegie Endowment's *Arab Reform Bulletin*, the *Global Media Journal*, and elsewhere. His commentary has appeared in Arab and American newspapers.

George Hishmeh is a Washington-based syndicated columnist and writer for *Gulf News* (Dubai), *The Jordan Times* (Amman) and *The Middle East Times* (Washington). He is a former president of the Washington Association of Arab Journalists, a group that includes some 40 journalists accredited to most of the Arab media, print and electronic. He previously served as editor of *al-Majal* monthly magazine and also the *Arabic Wireless File*, a daily news service; both published by the U.S. Information Agency, where he worked for 25 years until 1998.

In 1969 he was editor of *Mideast* magazine, a Washington-based bimonthly magazine. On his arrival in the United States in 1968, he was on the staff of the *Chicago Sun-Times* and in 1971 he was an assistant foreign editor at *The Washington Post*. Prior to coming to the United States, he was editor-in-chief of *The Daily Star* of Beirut, Lebanon 1962-1967 and in 1967 was founding editor of *The Libyan Times*, Benghazi. He was also a correspondent for the Associated Press in Kuwait (1958) and in Libya (1967). Hishmeh was born in Nazareth, Palestine.

Claude Salhani is editor of the *Middle East Times* and a political analyst in Washington. Prior to his current assignment, Salhani ran the Intelligence, Security and Terrorism desk at United Press International. Salhani specializes in the Middle East/North Africa, Islam and terrorism. He is a senior associate at the Washington, D.C.-based Institute of World Affairs and a member of the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS). He appears regularly on numerous radio and television programs as a political commentator, including CNN, Fox News, French radio and TV, Canadian radio and TV (in English and French), BBC, VOA, al-Hurra, al-Arabiya and others. He is a columnist for the *Middle East Times*, writes a weekly column for Dubai's *Khaleej Times*, and for the Beirut monthly *Executive* magazine. He recently became a syndicated columnist.

Will Stebbins is Aljazeera English bureau chief for the Americas. He began his career as a cameraman, which took him to the former Yugoslavia. From a base in Zagreb. He spent three years covering the wars both in Croatia and in Bosnia. In 1995 he was invited to join the staff of Worldwide Television News as a journalist at their London headquarters and from there he traveled regularly on assignment to the conflict in the Balkans. In 1997 he was named Worldwide Television News Cairo Bureau Chief and moved to Egypt. As well as covering the terrorist attacks in Luxor and Cairo, Stebbins spent a lot of time in the Gulf for the various build-ups against Saddam Hussein during the Clinton administration. During this period time in West Africa, Stebbins witnessed the fall of long time president of Zaire, Mobutu Sese Seko.

In 1998, when Fidel Castro invited the AP to return to Cuba after a 30-year absence, Stebbins was invited by the AP to join their operation in Cuba to set up the broadcast news gathering team. In 1999, he moved to Havana, and spent two years building the bureau. Stebbins was one of only two permanently based North American journalists covering Cuba at the time. He was there throughout the Elian Gonzalez affair and supplied the first television pictures of the boy's return to Cuba.

In 2001 the AP asked Stebbins to take up a new challenge: to move to Miami as a regional executive to develop the AP's broadcast news gathering operation throughout Latin America. He spent two years traveling the region, raising the AP's profile, building alliances with local broadcasters, and directing the expansion of resources.

In 2003 Stebbins relocated once again to Washington, D.C., to take charge of AP's Latin America desk and direct all coverage of the region. It was in Washington, D.C., in 2005 that he was approached by Al Jazeera and recruited to establish the Washington Broadcast Center and the news gathering operation for the Americas. As the first man on board for Al Jazeera English in the Americas, Stebbins built the journalistic team from scratch, leading it through the 2006 launch. In his present position, Stebbins continues to direct Al Jazeera's expansion.