**AU Newsmakers**  
**December 12 – December 19, 2014**  
*Prepared by University Communications*  
*For prior weeks, go to [http://www.american.edu/media/inthemedia.cfm](http://www.american.edu/media/inthemedia.cfm)*

### Top Stories

**Bold U.S.-Cuba Thaw in Relations Closes 53 Year Cold War Chapter**  
Several American University experts found themselves in Havana when the release of Alan Gross took place. Domestic and international media outlets relied on AU experts in Washington and on the ground in Havana for discussion and analysis on the normalization of diplomatic relations.

**The New York Times**  
Eric Hershberg, director of the American University Center for Latin American and Latino Studies, spoke to the *New York Times* for three separate articles about the significance of normalized relations between the U.S. and Cuba. Hershberg also spoke to BBC online and WBEZ, Chicago's NPR affiliate. (12/17 – 12/19) *listen to part 2 of WBEZ interview here*

School of International Service scholar-in-residence Johanna Mendelson-Forman appeared on Fox News Channel to discuss the history of the embargo on Cuba and the Helms-Burton Act, referring to them as failed policies. Mendelson-Forman also spoke to the *Wall Street Journal* and appeared on WAMU's *The Diane Rehm Show* on NPR, WTOP and WMAL radio. (12/17 – 12/18) *link not available for WMAL*

Government professor William LeoGrande appeared on MSNBC's *The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell*, live from Havana, Cuba, to discuss President Obama’s executive authority, the Helms-Burton Act and the reaction in Cuba. LeoGrande also spoke to CNN, USA Today, CBS News online, and the *Sun Sentinel* and *International Business Times*. (12/17 – 12/19)

**LeoGrande’s Foreign Policy** commentary *A New Dawn in Cuba*, written from Havana, explained the scope of the thaw in U.S.-Cuban relations that Presidents Obama and Raul Castro announced after the release of Alan Gross earlier in the day. (12/17)

International service professor Philip Brenner spoke to KABC Los Angeles radio, live from Havana, Cuba, to discuss the U.S. economic benefits of normalized U.S. relations with Cuba. Brenner also spoke to Al Jazeera online and Cuban News Agency. (12/17 – 12/18) *listen to part 2 of KABC interview here*

### Op-Eds/AU Authors

**There Are No Ticking Time Bombs in Torture Law**  
In a *U.S. News & World Report* op-ed, government professor Chris Edelson explained why Supreme Court Justice Scalia’s recent comments in an interview on the CIA torture report confused the fact that there is no justification for torture under U.S. law or international conventions. (12/16)
Dramatic Depictions of Torture Increase Support for It

For the Washington Post's Monkey Cage blog, international service professor Joseph Young and Department of Justice, Law & Criminology adjunct instructor Erin Kearns discussed their research on the public’s perception of torture. Young and Kearns found that dramatic depictions of effective torture on television, such as those in “24,” increased the public’s belief in the tactics. (12/14)

Year-end Tax Planning Tips

In an op-ed for the Hill, executive director of AU’s Kogod Tax Center, Donald Williamson, offered five year-end tax-planning tips to help taxpayers better understand their liability and plan for filing in 2015 and beyond. (12/13)

Expertise

CIA Report Revives Legal Debate on Interrogation

For Associated Press, law professor Stephen Vladeck spoke about the CIA torture report and prosecution of U.S. officials. Vladeck questioned the value of prosecution and encouraged a different approach to prevent torture in the future. The article syndicated more than 500 times. (12/14)

Threats, Ethics Fail to Deter U.S. Media on Sony Emails

For Agence France-Presse, journalism professor John Watson spoke about the ethics of publishing the Sony emails, saying that journalists should not participate in stealing information. Watson argued that journalists are expected to balance the public interest against the potential harm that a piece of information might cause. (12/15)

#HashtagActivismMatters: Some Experts See Online-to-IRL Change in Police Protests

For the Washington Post, communication professor Deen Freelon spoke about the ongoing cycle of how social media and protests “fuel” one another. Freelon also spoke to WUNC radio, an NPR affiliate in North Carolina. (12/14, 12/17)

Asia’s Fragile Caves Face New Risks from Development

In a Yale Environment 360 interview, environmental science professor David Culver spoke about the diverse species of life found in Southeast Asia caves. Culver noted that caves, no matter where they are in the world, stand a chance of survival if they are part of a protected landscape. The story also ran in The Guardian (U.K. edition). (12/18)

Costly Missteps Mark U.S. Road to War

Foreign policy professor Gordon Adams spoke to Financial Times about the $1 trillion bill for the 13-year war in Afghanistan, saying that, during wartime, it is common for “fiscal discipline to fly out the window.” Adams also spoke to Federal News Radio about the Overseas Contingency Operations budget. (12/14)

Jamin Raskin on Atheist Ban

For NPR, Law and Government Program director Jamin Raskin spoke about the provision in Maryland’s constitution that bans atheist Americans from serving in several state offices, saying that the provision is “junk in our constitutional attic.” (12/17)
How Will Putin Respond to This Economic Crisis?
For CBS News online, School of International Service dean James Goldgeier spoke about the effect of declining oil prices on Russia’s economy and how Russian President Vladimir Putin’s policies may be influenced. (12/16)

Why 2016 Will Be a Battle Between the Grassroots and the Donors
Candice Nelson, director of the Campaign Management Institute, spoke to NBC News online about the upcoming 2016 presidential race and the significance funding plays on the primary elections. (12/18)

As Jeb Bush Signals Bid, He Faces Skepticism from Conservatives
For the Orlando Sentinel, School of Professional & Extended Studies professor Richard Semiatin spoke about Jeb Bush's potential entrance into the race for the GOP presidential nomination and the challenges he would face. (12/16)

DOJ Intervention May Help Conn. Police Regain Community’s Trust
International studies professor Cathy Schneider spoke to NPR about racial profiling and the need for positive police outreach throughout minority communities. (12/17)

Putin Press Conference
For CCTV-America, executive director of the Initiative for Russian Culture Anton Fedyashin provided analysis of President Vladimir Putin's public remarks on the Russian economy. Fedyashin talked about how the pressures could lead to Russia taking steps to diversify its economy. (12/18)

Bonus Clips
New Digital Editions Choose to Design Their Apple Newsstand Apps in Landscape
Talking New Media featured University Communication’s American Magazine in an article about digital publications designed in landscape layout, praising AU magazine’s Apple Newsstand app. (12/15)