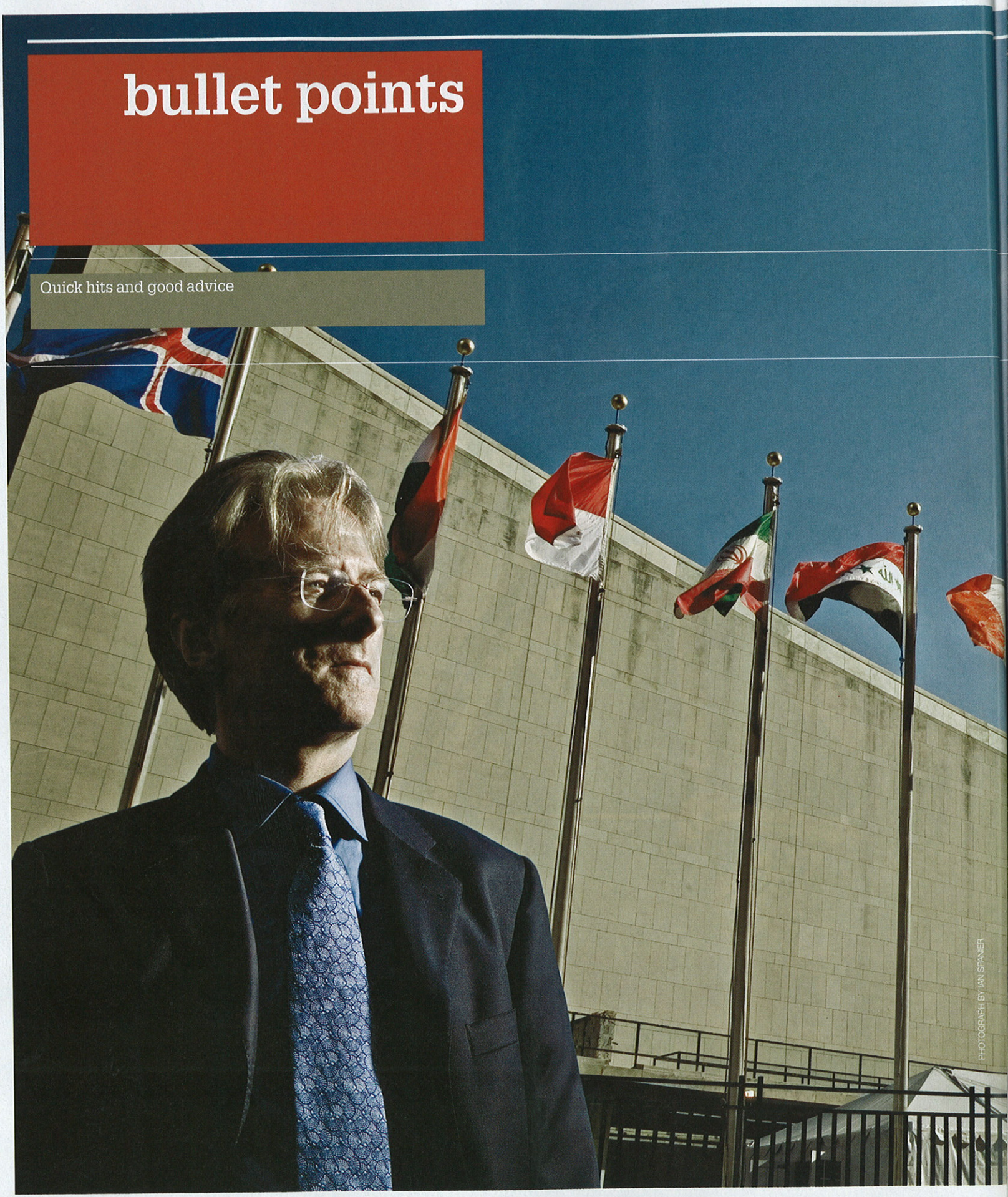
bullet points

Quick hits and good advice



PHOTOGRAPH BY IAN SPANIER

C. Holland Taylor used to solve business problems as a telecom CEO. Now he's aiming higher — with a goal of ending religious extremism.

THINKING BIG
C. Holland Taylor applies business principles to international relations.

AN EX-CEO'S PLAN FOR WORLD PEACE

Former telecom chief executive C. Holland Taylor attempts to connect the world and end extremism

C. Holland Taylor works 70 hours a week, sleeps very little and divides his time among business dinners, conferences and meetings. He travels often between Europe, Asia and the U.S., BlackBerry in tow. Yet he's been retired since 1998, when he stepped down as CEO of USA Global Link, a telecom pioneer in the early days of international phone deregulation.

Taylor, 51, now dedicates himself full-time, without pay, to his post atop LibForAll, a nonprofit foundation he cofounded with former Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid. LibForAll's mission is to bring Muslim leaders around the world together in dialogue, with the goal of ending religious extremism.

Taylor says his transition from corporate America to the nonprofit world was seamless, and speaks of LibForAll with the passion and laser-like focus of a CEO on a road show. "I'm applying business principles to build a nonprofit organization," says Taylor, speaking by phone during one of his few available moments (10 P.M. Bali time after a dinner party). "When I worked in telecom, we used preexisting networks to provide our service. With LibForAll, we're building a global network of Muslim leaders to implement a strategy to defeat the ideology of radical Islam that underlies terrorism."

Through an array of initiatives, including educational and cultural programs, he and Wahid harness the influence of religious and intellectual leaders — and even Muslim pop stars — to broaden their reach.

Taylor is among a wave of senior executives, financially secure and physically fit, with the will to channel their busy lifestyles into altruism in the nonprofit world. "They often find that they've neglected philanthropic and humanitarian interests, so now they're looking for ways to get involved," says Michael Jeans, president of New Directions, a Boston-based career-transition management firm.

Although Taylor's foundation may seem an odd follow-up to his telecom career, his background makes him a perfect fit. A military child, Taylor lived for three years in Iran as a kid, backpacked through Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan and has meditated since he was 18. "My own meditation and spirituality was key," he says. "Meditation is universal, and helps me connect with people and form a relationship of mutual understanding and trust." It helps that he possesses the diplomatic and persuasive acumen to broker relationships with high-level clerics, heads of Muslim organizations, university officials and political leaders like Wahid.

Taylor plans to maintain his breakneck pace indefinitely, happy that he can apply the skills he learned in his first career. "I couldn't do what I'm doing now without experience in the telecom industry," he says. "LibForAll is a serious business. But it's infinitely more rewarding." CL

> "My own meditation and sprituality are key. They're universal, and they help me connect with people and form a relationship of mutual understanding."

WRITER: BETH KWON. PHOTOGRAPH BY IAN SPANIER