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Description of document:	Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) ad hoc programming assessments undertaken by BBG to assess specific content areas for accuracy and balance, 2009-2010
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*Office of the General Counsel
Freedom of Information and Privacy Act*

May 26, 2011

RE: Request Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act – FOIA #11-021

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), dated December 28, 2010, which the Agency received on January 10, 2011. In your request, you ask for a copy of any ad hoc programming assessments undertaken by BBG during FY2009 and/or FY2010 to assess specific content areas for accuracy and balance.

The Agency has completed its search and found the enclosed responsive documents. No information was withheld or redacted, and there are no fees chargeable to you associated with this request.

This completes the Agency's response to this request and it is now closed. If you have any questions regarding your request, you may contact me at (202) 203-4550 or write the Office of the General Counsel, Broadcasting Board of Governors, 330 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3349, Washington, DC 20237. Currently, inquiries are not accepted via E-mail.

Sincerely,

Andrew T. Krog
FOIA and Privacy Act Officer





Note: The BBG broadcasts in 60 languages, including three types of English language programs: Global English, Special English to learn English, English-to-Africa targeted to the African continent.

FY 2009 Highlights and Accomplishments

Over the past year, the BBG has effectively distributed breaking news, in-depth reporting and reasoned analysis on traditional and new media platforms, illustrating that international broadcasting is the most effective U.S. tool to provide a worldwide audience with accurate news and information and relevant discussions to those who do not receive this from their own media.

Key accomplishments in FY 2009 include:

- The BBG enhanced and increased broadcasts and Internet programming to information-deprived areas in the world, including North Korea, Burma, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Darfur, Russia, China and Vietnam.
- The BBG successfully launched crisis surge broadcasting to tumultuous parts of the world including Georgia, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, Burma, Kenya, and Iran.
- BBG language services provided in-depth coverage of the 2008 U.S. elections and the inauguration of Barack Obama, as well as coverage of crucial elections and referendums around the world. Language services covered campaigns, gave voice to opposition parties, and reported on voter registration and vote counts in countries worldwide, including Indonesia, Afghanistan, Iran, Bolivia, and Venezuela.

Voice of America

- In January 2009, VOA improved its ability to reach North Korea by partnering with a South Korean broadcaster. This partnership now allows VOA Korean to supplement its expanded shortwave broadcasts with 90 minutes of daily programming transmitted on medium-wave to listeners inside North Korea.
- Broadcasting to Africa achieved new success in FY 2009. The Zimbabwe project has added a call-in/callback talk show to promote interaction, as well as a radio serial that will deal with the daily life of Zimbabweans in theatrical form. In Zimbabwe, 16 percent of the adult population tune into VOA on a weekly basis, and among those listening, 35 percent indicated that VOA was their most important source of news. VOA's Somali Service added a half-hour morning show in June, bringing total airtime to 3.5 hours daily. Among Nigeria's Hausa speaking population, 47 percent listen to VOA at least once a week, and more than 1,000 people attended each of two VOA-sponsored town hall meetings addressing health issues. In Rwanda, 70 percent of the adult population listens weekly to VOA's Central Africa Service, which maintains its collaboration with the State Department to produce youth refugee radio programs in Burundi and Tanzania.
- In Armenia, VOA's weekly reach grew to over 42 percent in 2009- up from 26 percent last year. The Armenian Service, which consists of just 2 full-time staff and 2 contractors, secured an affiliation with one of the top two networks in the country.
- VOA's Burmese Service added to its 3.5 hours of daily shortwave radio broadcasts by launching its first satellite TV program to Burma. This new program airs Sunday mornings and is repeated during the week, providing news and images that many Burmese would not otherwise see.
- In Iran, VOA's Persian News Network (PNN) commands a weekly audience share of 29.9 percent of adults. PNN played a crucial role in providing election coverage by ramping up the TV programming schedule, adding a one-hour morning show to an existing seven-hour PNN TV schedule. In addition, PNN expanded its web operations, adding a Twitter feed to its mix of blogs and social networking pages. Not only did PNN use the web to deliver content to its audience, it also took advantage of web capability for receiving content. Desperate to communicate with the outside world given heavy media restrictions, Iranian citizen journalists used web-based hubs to send VOA upwards of 300 videos a day, along with thousands of still pictures and emails.
- In Haiti, VOA is the leading international broadcaster with 50 percent of the adult population listening on a weekly basis, and 21 percent listening daily.

Office of Cuba Broadcasting (Radio and TV Martí)

- In December 2008, OCB launched its newly redesigned website, Martinoticias.com, with live streaming of radio and television programming.
- During February 2009, OCB successfully installed a new 100kW medium-wave transmitter at its Marathon Transmitting Station, replacing two older transmitters that had been in use since 1985.

- On April 13, 2009 President Obama announced a series of changes in U.S. policy towards Cuba in an effort to promote people-to-people exchanges. The measures included lifting restrictions on travel and remittances to Cuba by Cuban-Americans. Radio Martí News provided extensive coverage of the White House announcement including reactions.
- Both Radio and TV Martí provided extensive coverage of the Honduran crisis. Coverage included live reports from journalists in Honduras, members of the parliament, experts and academics, as well as statements on U.S. policy towards Honduras, with special emphasis on the statements by President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton. Radio Martí also broadcast reactions from Cuban dissidents who all called for the respect of democratic institutions.
- TV Martí has provided programming to Voice of America (Spanish) such as *Alto Voltaje* (High Voltage), *Hollywood in 30 Minutes*, and a half hour sports program. Recently TV Martí provided technical support for VOA's *Foro Interamericano* (Interamerican Forum) and is in the process of coordinating more joint ventures and program sharing.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

- Radio Farda provided round-the-clock breaking news, stories of global interest, and local domestic stories to the people of Iran on the radio and the web. Radio Farda provided 21 consecutive hours of live programming on the 2008 U.S. Election Day; broadcast President Obama's Norouz New Year address to the Iranian people; covered the 2009 Iranian presidential campaign; and expanded programming to cover the massive protests that followed the June 12 election. In June 2009, Radio Free Afghanistan launched its dedicated comprehensive coverage of the August 2009 Afghan presidential election and interviewed each of the 41 candidates.
- In June 2009, Radio Free Iraq produced special programming when foreign troops completed their withdrawal from the cities of Iraq. FY 2009 programs stressed the need for Iraqi citizens to take responsibility for the future development of their country.
- When Russian troops invaded Georgia in August 2008, the Georgian Service added a fourth hour of primetime news to its daily program clock; established a strong Internet component to its ongoing coverage of the conflict, with audio, photo, and video galleries; and published special blogs from Service correspondents who remained in two besieged cities throughout the Russian occupation.
- RFE/RL websites have increased page views since launching in a new web content management system. In May 2009, the website of Radio Free Afghanistan showed a 400 percent increase in page views with most of its visits coming from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. In April 2009, the Georgian Service's website improved by over 500 percent in all categories. And in March 2009, RFE/RL's website for Moldova saw an 800 percent increase in page views and an increase in audio listening by a factor of 20, while the Macedonian site enjoyed a 400 percent rise in page views and 300 percent increase in the number of listens.
- In FY 2009, RFE/RL attracted significant audiences with television programs broadcast in Bosnia, Macedonia, Georgia, and Belarus.

Radio Free Asia

- RFA's Uyghur Service reported on the deadly riots that erupted in Urumqi, the capital of China's northwest Xinjiang province in which nearly 200 people were killed and more than 1,400 arrested.
- In July 2009, direct visits to RFA websites increased by 58 percent over the same period in 2008, while users viewed 51 percent more pages.
- In FY 2009, RFA continued its surge broadcasting to Tibet, which began with the March 2008 crackdown by Chinese forces on the peaceful protest by monks in Lhasa.
- The Korean Service broadcast five hours daily to listeners in North Korea, giving audiences news and information they would otherwise be denied.
- During FY 2009, the Burma Service continued its surge broadcast schedule including more popular feature programs such as Voices of the Sangha, which provides a window into Burmese monastic life, and Mid-Show which targets a younger audience.
- In FY 2009, RFA completed the final stages of its broadcast facility upgrade, including the installation of new IP digital consoles and the migration of all language services to the most recent version of the Rivendell broadcast automation system.
- In February 2009, RFA conducted an Employee Perspectives Survey which concluded that the percentage of favorable responses on the issues of RFA, management, and the working environment in 2009 exceeded 2007 in 36 of the 41 questions.

Middle East Broadcasting Networks (Alhurra, Alhurra Iraq, Alhurra Europe and Radio Sawa)

- *Al Youm*, which launched on March 8, 2009, has increased Alhurra's standing in the Middle East with a broadcast platform and information mix unique in the region. *Al Youm* broadcasts live for three hours from studios in Dubai, Beirut, Cairo, and Jerusalem with live reports from the U.S. and throughout Middle East.
- Based on surveys in 14 Arab countries, Alhurra and Radio Sawa reach weekly adult audiences of 27.7 million and 16.4 million people, respectively. Alhurra and Sawa are watched or listened to by over 70 percent of the adult Iraqi population on a weekly basis. Alhurra reaches 11.1 percent of adults in Egypt weekly; 22.8 percent in Jordan; 10.8 percent in Lebanon; 26.8 percent in Morocco; 30.1 percent in Oman; 10.3 percent in Saudi Arabia; 54.6 percent in Syria; and 17.2 percent in the United Arab Emirates.
- The *Afia Darfur* 30-minute program was broadcast into Darfur via shortwave. The program features news about Darfur and elsewhere around the world; news that is not accessible to the people of Darfur through the official media. In addition to the latest news, the program features information on how the Darfur crisis is portrayed in the western media, refugee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) issues, health issues as well as features about the culture, history and heritage of the diverse ethnic groups of Darfur.

FY 2010 Highlights and Accomplishments



Over the past year, the BBG has effectively distributed breaking news, in-depth reporting and reasoned analysis on traditional and new media platforms, illustrating that international broadcasting is the most effective U.S. tool to provide a worldwide audience with accurate news and information and relevant discussions to those who do not receive this from their own media.

The broadcasts of the BBG entities reach a worldwide audience of over 165 million in 59 languages. The annual cost of delivering these programs over radio, television, and Internet is \$4.60 per weekly audience member. Throughout the world, over 1 billion people are aware of broadcasts by the BBG entities.

Key accomplishments in FY 2010 include:

- The BBG enhanced and increased broadcasts and Internet/mobile programming to information-deprived areas in the world, including North Korea, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and Zimbabwe.
- The BBG successfully launched crisis surge broadcasting to tumultuous parts of the world including Haiti, Ethiopia, and Venezuela, and continued surge broadcasting to Burma, Kenya, Iran, and Georgia.

Voice of America

- After the January earthquake in Haiti, VOA's Creole Service began immediate unprecedented news coverage. The Service added a 90-minute special program within hours after the quake. A sustained radio programming surge began the next day, along with an Internet hotline for survivors and their families on the Service's website. Overall programming hours increased from 1.5 hours to 10.5 hours Monday through Friday, and from one hour to 9.5 hours Saturday and Sunday.
- New research shows that VOA's Persian News Network (PNN) is the top international broadcaster to Iran with 19.6 percent of the adult population watching at least once weekly. In April, PNN launched a weekly satirical show, *Parazit*. The show's Facebook page has surpassed 100,000 friends and now records about 500,000 impressions after each new program is posted. PNN began offering a new mobile device application that allows Iranians to download and send content to VOA via smart phone.
- VOA's Radio Deewa, Pashto programming to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, continued its aggressive reporting on military activity in the target region as well as the struggles of democratic movements and U.S. policies toward Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the region. Its network of 27 stringers provided extensive daily coverage of the tribal areas, including live reports from the refugee camps, despite Taliban threats and attacks.
- In June, VOA and Express 24/7, a 24-hour English-language cable news channel in Pakistan, launched a joint TV program on a trial basis called *The Platform*, which focuses on key issues in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship and the fight against terrorism. The program is the first English-language TV talk show to be jointly produced by stations in Pakistan and the United States.
- According to InterMedia research, VOA's audience reach in Afghanistan has increased to 50.4 percent, and the Service's Dari and Pashto language websites have more than doubled their traffic since last year with more than 108,000 visits in June. In September, VOA's Afghan Service launched *Karwan*, a new television program which takes an exciting and youthful approach to critical issues facing the country.
- In response to the government closure of six Venezuelan news outlets in January, VOA's Spanish Service launched a new radio program, which originates from both VOA studios in Washington and Radio Martí studios in Miami, and uses the talents of both organizations.
- VOA responded to jamming by the Ethiopian government with the launch of a morning surge program in Amharic, expansion of shortwave frequencies for Amharic, Afan Oromo, and Tigrigna, satellite transmissions for these languages, and email newsletters to get around website blocking.
- VOA's Burmese Service sponsored the first-ever televised seminar on the Burmese general elections. More than 200 Burmese journalists and regional experts on Burma attended the seminar, held in Chiangmai, Northern Thailand in February.
- VOA's Russian Service successfully transitioned from a radio and TV broadcaster to a thriving web-based outlet for news and information. The Service's new media product, which includes a

website and a strong presence on popular social networking sites and blogs, features a wide range of interactive activities for its audience.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

- In January, RFE/RL launched Radio Mashaal, a targeted stream in the Pashto language directed specifically at audiences in the Pashtun border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Radio Mashaal currently has nine hours of live broadcasts daily, including call-in shows. With its dual-language programming and its tone of moderation, RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan played a critical role in promoting national unity and religious tolerance. RFE/RL is among the most trusted sources of news in Afghanistan.
- RFE/RL's Radio Farda launched a live satirical program, *Radio Pasfarda*, that has been as well-received by listeners as it has been attacked by pro-regime media.
- During the parliamentary elections in March, Radio Free Iraq broadcast marathon coverage, including interviews with voters, election officials, analysts, and Iraqi VIPs. Radio Free Iraq's civic-minded programming promotes national unity and the universality of human rights.
- In March, the Russian Service devoted substantial coverage to the suicide bombings in the Moscow metro, including on-the-ground reporting and reactions from officials. RFE/RL's Russian Service's website has seen steady growth in the past two years, with triple the number of page views and site visits.
- In the run-up to the Ukrainian presidential election in February, RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service provided multifaceted coverage and analysis of the candidates and, following the election of Viktor Yanukovych to the presidency, Ukraine's pursuit of closer ties with Russia. After five years of scattered coverage, RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service returned to national airwaves with long-form programming.
- With daily Russian-language programs targeted primarily to Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, RFE/RL's *Ekho Kavkaza* was created in November 2009 to overcome misconceptions and mistrust between the peoples of these conflict zones and the people of Georgia.
- In April, as a popular revolt in Kyrgyzstan toppled the government of President Kurmanbek Bakiev, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service provided swift, accurate, and objective coverage, including on-the-ground reporting, an interview with the ousted President, and the first video interview with Roza Otunbayeva, the Chairperson of the Interim Government.

Radio Free Asia

- RFA broadcast five hours of daily radio programming to North Korea and in March began leased medium wave transmissions from a Russian facility.
- RFA's Mandarin Service has been aggressively incorporating citizen journalism into its editorial content and in the past year, the Service has produced on average two exclusive stories per week based on leads submitted by listeners and/or citizen journalists. RFA Mandarin began a

new program "Forum for Women and Children," which explores topics such as domestic violence, gender discrimination, child abuse, and women's health issues.

- During the April earthquake in Yushu, a mostly Tibetan-inhabited area in China's Qinghai province, RFA Tibetan aired hourly updates from morning to midnight, and reported many exclusive stories. Locals and relief volunteers contacted RFA to report first hand information about the devastation of the earthquake. RFA Cantonese did extensive reporting during the aftermath of a massive earthquake in Qinghai in April. Citizen journalists provided more than 100 quake photos, many which were published on RFA's Cantonese website and YouTube.
- In anticipation of the November general elections in Burma, RFA Burmese added new programs to educate and inform the public about the constitution, voting rights, election laws, and related issues.
- RFA produced a video documentary of the Mekong River, which received Society of Environmental Journalists 2010 First Place award for Outstanding Online Reporting on the Environment. RFA received American Women in Radio & Television's Gracie Allen Award this year for "Half the Xinjiang Sky," a multimedia web presentation focused on Uyghur women following the deadly events in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Guangdong province in the summer of 2009.

Middle East Broadcasting Networks (Alhurra and Radio Sawa)

- In Iraq, Radio Sawa and Alhurra have made a definitive impact with programming designed exclusively for the local target audiences and in the Iraqi dialect. More than a third of the Alhurra-Iraq schedule is localized and many of these programs are taped from Alhurra's Baghdad bureau and hosted by local journalists. Both services provided extensive coverage of the Iraqi National Parliamentary elections and subsequent negotiations to form a coalition government, featuring interviews with voters, election officials, analysts, and Iraqi VIPs.
- Through its flagship program *Al Youm*, which is broadcast live from studios in Dubai, Beirut, Cairo, Jerusalem, and MBN's headquarters, Alhurra provided news of the day, discussed compelling social issues, presented unique perspectives from across the Middle East and from the U.S., and profiled personal success stories from across the Middle East region. MBN retooled its current affairs programming to develop a series that focuses on regional social and cultural issues of concern.
- Alhurra became one of the only Arabic-language media outlets to address the humanitarian crisis facing the Darfuri refugees. In the Alhurra produced documentary, *Konoungo: The Darfuri Exile*, the network presented viewers with an inside look at the lives of displaced Sudanese refugees at the Konoungo refugee camp in Eastern Chad. The documentary prompted debate in the media and blogosphere.
- Alhurra produced a five-part documentary on the complex and diverse story of Arab Americans from their initial wave of immigration in the 1800s through a post 9/11 environment, which included interviews with prominent Arab-Americans and was capped off by a Town Hall Meeting in Dearborn, Michigan, where Arab-Americans discussed their lives and the issues facing their community.

- To further engage audiences, Alhurra launched a segment called *Alhurra and the People* that asks both U.S. and Middle Eastern people from all walks of life to broadcast their response to a single questions-of-the-day related to political and social issues. MBN has been developing a pilot television program that brings together young adults in the Middle East and in the U.S. via direct satellite connection to discuss issues of common interest and societal relevance, such as gender-based freedoms, the importance of higher education, and family values.
- Through social media, MBN has been reaching out to engage with the people of the region in a discussion of topics covered on Alhurra and Radio Sawa. MBN improved its web presence and has launched social networking efforts – focusing initial efforts on Facebook, Twitter, Audio and Video on Demand, RSS feeds and mobile apps. During the Iraqi elections, both Alhurra and Radio Sawa encouraged audiences to go to Facebook and post their election stories on the networks' fan pages. Alhurra and Radio Sawa shared those stories on the air, developing a communal experience with Iraqis throughout the country.

Office of Cuba Broadcasting (Radio and TV Martí)

- OCB continues to increase its close cooperation with the Latin America Division of Voice of America, including sharing studios, journalists, and producers with VOA and collaboration on a daily one hour news program in Washington and Miami.
- In the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, TV and Radio Martí provided full support for VOA's surge broadcast to Haiti. OCB's journalists, producers, and broadcast technicians joined VOA in reporting the tragic news and the world wide relief effort. OCB support has included sharing Miami studio space, collaboration on live interviews from Haiti and the Haitian community in South Florida, and radio signal feed to Haiti through the Marathon transmitting station.
- Radio and TV Martí provided extensive coverage of the Congressional debate on U.S. policy towards Cuba including a proposed law that would eliminate the restrictions for Americans traveling to Cuba and facilitate commerce with the island.
- Four new antenna towers for Radio Martí's medium wave (AM Radio) Marathon Transmitter Station were installed, providing higher reliability, unlimited availability of 100kW power level, and a louder audio signal to listeners. In July, TV Martí began broadcasting new, weekend primetime programming via DirecTV.

Technology, Services, and Innovation

The Office of Technology, Services, and Innovation (TSI), formerly known as the Office of Engineering and Technical Services, provides engineering and technological support to BBG staff and facilities in Washington, D.C. and abroad. In addition to managing a complex global network of over 80 transmitting sites delivering shortwave, medium-wave (AM), FM, and TV broadcasts, TSI leases broadcast time at 23 transmitting facilities in 14 countries. To meet the needs of its varied broadcast customers, TSI is responsible for an extensive network of leased satellite and fiber optic circuits and other international telecommunication systems, which includes providing support to a worldwide array of hundreds of satellite receivers and earth stations and a rapidly growing Internet delivery system.