



The Public Diplomacy Council

Seizing the Moment in U.S. Overseas Broadcasting: A Call for Action

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By broad consensus, members of the Public Diplomacy Council see an unprecedented and immediate need for reform in America's publicly funded international broadcasting. Why?

- Anti-American opinion abroad is at an all-time high among both adversaries and allies.
- The arc of crises encompassing Burma, Tibet, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Georgia and Russia necessitates an urgent strengthening of America's multimedia, U.S.-funded broadcasting networks to the world.
- In addition to the Arab and Muslim countries, these networks must reach tens of millions of people in other regions. There, populations suffer daily from sectarian warfare, repression, or media blackouts by a growing number of authoritarian regimes.
- A bipartisan consensus exists on Capitol Hill to strengthen rather than degrade U.S. international broadcasting.
- Under these circumstances, a proactive, global Voice of America is essential if the nation's policies and ideals are to compete on the world's airwaves and websites. Surge broadcasting in neglected regions outside the Middle East is imperative. Nothing less than America's national security and global stability are at stake.

The necessary reform must be preceded by a broad, in-depth, independent, professional review of the mission, operations and structure of our nation's international broadcasting. That review must have the support both of the new President and the 111th Congress. To position America's international broadcasting in the interim, a Committee of the Council has formulated specific recommendations for the Broadcasting Board of Governors and the members of the 110th Congress,

For the Broadcasting Board of Governors:

Last June, a new U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) chairman took office and five other members are due to be installed or reappointed by the end of the year. Since the Board oversees VOA, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, the Middle East Broadcast Network, and Radio TV Marti to Cuba, it has the ultimate responsibility for all U.S. international broadcasting. The new Board has an opportunity to re-visit questionable priorities of its predecessor and make the case for an even greater investment in overseas broadcasting as the BBG approaches the end of its first decade as an independent entity. We recommend that the Board:

1. Provide resources required to maintain present levels and eventually to ensure 24/7 capability of VOA English worldwide. China, Russia, France, Iran, and Al Jazeera all are expanding broadcasts in English, the first truly global language of diplomacy, trade, the arts and the Internet.
2. Maintain core “failsafe” shortwave and FM radio programming to China, Russia and the Balkans.
3. Review carefully allocation of resources to ensure an appropriate balance among
 - a. the networks’ core programming and transmission services (i.e., radio, newsgathering and shortwave),
 - b. investments in broadcasts to priority Muslim audiences, and
 - c. new technologies.
4. Sustain creative ways to encourage all directors of U.S. international broadcasting elements to generate credible, complementary programs relevant to leaders of other lands in an expanding audio, Internet and video-based, viral media environment linking millions of new content producers

For the 110th Congress:

1. **Reaffirm the House of Representatives’ reversal in House Report 110-197 and HR 2746 of the previous BBG proposal to**
 - a. **abolish VOA worldwide English radio broadcasts, and**
 - b. **eliminate or reduce 13 other VOA languages and eight others at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and Radio Free Asia (RFA).**
2. **Appropriate in the forthcoming omnibus conference not less than \$690 million for international broadcasting in FY 08. At about a dime every time a regular listener or viewer tunes in, this is one of the most cost effective programs in the U.S. government.**

The nonpartisan Public Diplomacy Council consists of 80 veteran professionals and scholars who advocate strengthening of the nation’s overseas information, cultural and educational programs.