

HEIL, ALAN L. JR.

Board Member Emeritus

Summary: As a 36-year veteran of the Voice of America (VOA), Alan Heil traveled to more than 40 countries a foreign correspondent in the Middle East, and later as director of News and Current Affairs, deputy director of programs, and deputy director of the nation's largest publicly-funded overseas multimedia network. VOA in 2017 reached more than 236 million people in 47 languages.

Career

Heil joined VOA in February 1962 as a news writer trainee in its Washington central newsroom. A graduate of Duke University majoring in English, he had previously been a suburban beat reporter at the Newark Evening News in New Jersey and as an enlisted man in the U.S. Army, he served as special events officer at the American Forces Network, Frankfurt, West Germany, from 1958 to 1960. His career at the Voice included service as Worldwide English regional editor for Africa, director of the Arabic Branch subcenters in Beirut, Lebanon, and Cairo, Egypt from 1965 to 1967, Middle East correspondent and bureau chief in Athens, Greece, from 1968 to 1971, and deputy director and director, New York Bureau, from 1971 to 1973. He returned to Washington headquarters in that latter year as deputy director of VOA's central News and Current Affairs department, and became director in August 1974. From 1982 until his retirement in 1998, Heil served in a variety of senior management positions, including director of broadcast operations, deputy director of programs, and deputy director (1997-1998). As a VOA senior executive, he testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1977 and the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy in 1993 and was acting director of the Voice from November 1996 until March 1997. After retirement, Heil continued to follow international broadcasting closely, writing the definitive account of VOA's first 60 years, *Voice of America: A History*, Columbia University Press, 2003/2006. He also edited the Public Diplomacy Council's anthology on international media, *Local Voice/Global Perspectives: Challenges Ahead for U.S. International Media*, published in 2008. Over the years, he has contributed numerous articles to The Channel Magazine, publication of the Association for International Broadcasting, U.K., and has appeared on National Public Radio and Voice of America talk shows a number of times.

Other Activities

Heil was secretary and a Board member of the Public Diplomacy Council, 2009-2010. He remains active today. He was an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) election observer in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo, 1998-2001 and participated in Presbyterian Church (USA) peacemaking study missions to the Balkans (1998) and the Middle East (1999). Heil has very much enjoyed serving as a guest lecturer on international media at George Washington University, the American University, Georgetown University, the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and George Mason University, Marymount College, and Strayer University as well as at Duke University, the School of Journalism, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Randolph Macon College in Lynchburg, Virginia, the University of Florida, Gainesville, and East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. In 2009, he co-authored a paper, "Renewing America's Voices: Ideas for Reform," with PDC emeritus board members and former USIA senior Foreign Service Officers and international broadcasting executives Walter Roberts and the late Barry Zorthian. The three VOA veterans also appeared before the newly-inaugurated U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors in 2010. Heil and his wife Dot live in Adamstown, Maryland, and have three daughters and eight grandchildren.