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**THE BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS:
FINDING THE RIGHT MEDIA FOR THE MESSAGE
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS
AND TERRORISM

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

APRIL 29, 2004

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**THE BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS:
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SAGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2004

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS
AND TERRORISM,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met at 2:30 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John E. Sununu (chairman of the subcommittee), presiding.

Present: Senators Sununu, Biden, and Bill Nelson.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN E. SUNUNU

Senator SUNUNU. Good afternoon and welcome to today's hearing of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Terrorism.

Today we will examine the Broadcasting Board of Governors [BBG] and evaluate whether we have found the right media mix and media message in the Middle East, a region whose importance to our country we all know well.

We will have two panels of distinguished witnesses. Panel one includes Mr. Tomlinson, Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors; Mr. Pattiz, Governor of the Broadcasting Board and Director of the Middle East Service; and Mr. Harb, News Director of Alhurra, the Middle East Television Network. Panel two includes Mr. Ford, Director of the International Affairs and Trade at the General Accounting Office; Dr. Telhami, the Anwar Sadat Professor of Peace at the University of Maryland; and former Ambassador Rugh of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University. We also have Dr. Ghareeb, Adjunct Professor of Middle East History and Politics at American University.

I want to thank all the panelists for being here today to talk about the new Government-funded Alhurra TV network, Radio Sawa, and all of the challenges of matching the media to the audience in the Middle East.

To win the war on terrorism, we need to not only defeat terrorists in the field, we need to defeat their ideas, their anti-democratic, anti-freedom, and the anti-American message that they espouse around the world, and most particularly in the Middle East. Today we will examine a key tool in the war on terrorist attempts to spread hatred and intolerance, the Broadcasting Board

of Governors and the Middle Eastern services, Alhurra satellite TV and Radio Sawa in particular.

A free, open, and fair media is vital to a free nation and a lasting democratic process. The dissemination of facts and open discussion of ideas are essential to the functioning of free institutions. The Broadcasting Board of Governors plays a vital role in the promotion of our foreign policy because it promotes and sustains freedom and democracy by broadcasting accurate and objective news and information about the United States and the world to audiences overseas.

The BBG supervises all U.S. Government-funded, non-military international broadcasting, in 54 languages to more than 100 markets worldwide. Its services include Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting as well. In 2002, the BBG began broadcasting Radio Sawa to the Middle East, and in 2004, just 2 months ago, the BBG started its Alhurra satellite television broadcasts.

The board's total 2004 budget for all activities is \$590 million and for 2005 the request is just shy of \$570 million.

The BBG transmits news, information, and accurate reports of U.S. Government policy, as well as thoughtful criticism, giving citizens of countries throughout the region the ability to judge for themselves, which is obviously an essential foundation for freedom and free thinking.

Last week here in the Foreign Relations committee, we held a series of hearings on the June 30 transition date in Iraq that were a fine example of the democratic process at work. Administration witnesses and non-governmental experts testified and Senators from both sides grappled with the tough issues we and the Iraqi people face during very challenging times.

BBG seeks to set a standard of solid journalism in a region where a history of government-controlled media has left the public cynical and journalists too often seem to equate strident criticism of the United States with independent reporting.

The BBG describes "marrying the mission to the market" as the fundamental strategy of U.S. international broadcasting today. But they must determine how to best reach large audiences in very complex, competitive media environments with news, as well as perspectives on American culture and information on official U.S. Government positions and policies. This task is further complicated by what is becoming an increasingly varied Middle Eastern broadcasting scene. While government-owned media still dominate national land-based TV and radio, satellite technology has created new stations that are competing vigorously for different segments of the market.

We will ask our panelists a number of questions. In our first panel, we will examine Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa as examples of innovation at the BBG. What media are most influential in the Middle East now? Is it TV? Is it radio? Is it newspapers or is it the Internet? How does the BBG identify its audience? How is the audience segmented? How does the BBG select the media and the programming to reach different audiences? And of course, how do we measure success?

On the second panel, we will see an overview of the GAO's recent work evaluating the performance of the BBG. Our panelists are uniquely qualified to further our understanding of the political environment and the media marketplace in which Alhurra and Radio Sawa operate. All three panelists on our second panel are distinguished authors with great personal experience in the region.

We want to better understand what journalists in the region see as their role and their responsibilities, ask what attitudes are among different countries and different people in the Middle East toward the United States. What do people think of these new broadcasting groups, Alhurra and Radio Sawa? And how can the United States most effectively promote the development of free, fair, and open media throughout the region?

As our members of the subcommittee appear, I will interrupt the proceedings to give them an opportunity to at least offer opening remarks and submit remarks for the record. But I do want to move along very quickly today, and as such, I will turn immediately to our panelists and ask you to summarize any written testimony that you have. Rest assured, we do have a fair number of questions. Again, thank you all for participating and we will begin with Mr. Kenneth Tomlinson.

[The prepared statement of Senator Sununu follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN E. SUNUNU

Good afternoon and welcome to today's hearing of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Terrorism of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Today we will examine the Broadcasting Board of Governors and evaluate whether we have found the right media for the message in the Middle East, a region whose importance to our country we all know well.

We will have two panels of distinguished witnesses. Panel one includes Mr. Tomlinson, Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors; Mr. Pattiz, Governor of the Broadcasting Board and Director of the Middle East Service; and Mr. Harb, News Director of Alhurra, the Middle East Television Network (METN). Panel two includes Mr. Ford, Director, International Affairs and Trade of the General Accounting Office; Dr. Telhami, Anwar Sadat Professor of Peace at the University of Maryland; former Ambassador Rugh of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University; and Dr. Ghareeb, Adjunct Professor of Middle East History and Politics, School of International Service, American University. Thank you for coming today to discuss the new U.S. Government-funded Alhurra, Radio Sawa, and the critical challenge of matching the media to the audience in the Middle East.

To win the war on terrorism we must not only defeat the terrorists in the field; we must also defeat their ideas, and the anti-democratic, anti-freedom, and anti-American message they espouse around the world—and most particularly in the Middle East. Today we will examine a key tool in our war on the terrorists' attempts to spread hate and intolerance: the Broadcasting Board of Governors and its Middle Eastern services—Alhurra satellite TV and Radio Sawa.

A free, open and fair media is vital to a free nation and a lasting democratic process. Dissemination of the facts and open discussion of ideas are essential to the functioning of free institutions. The BBG plays a vital role in the promotion of our foreign policy because it promotes and sustains "freedom and democracy by broadcasting accurate and objective news and information about the United States and the world to audiences overseas."

The BBG supervises all U.S. Government-funded non-military international broadcasting—in 54 languages to more than 100 markets worldwide. Its services include: Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (Radio and TV Marti). In 2002, the BBG also began broadcasting Radio Sawa to the Middle East, and in 2004, the BBG started its Alhurra satellite television broadcasts.

The Board's total FY 2004 budget for all its activities is \$592 million, and the FY 2005 request is \$569.3 million. The BBG has requested \$42.7 million for FY 2005 for METN. The Congressional Budget Office and the BBG estimate METN will cost between \$37 and \$42 million annually from 2004-2008.

The BBG transmits news, information, and accurate reports of U.S. Government policy, as well as thoughtful criticism, giving citizens of countries throughout the region the ability to judge for themselves, an essential foundation of freedom. Last week, here in the Foreign Relations Committee we held a series of hearings on the June 30 transition date in Iraq that were a terrific example of the democratic process at work. Administration witnesses and nongovernment experts of distinction testified, and Senators from both sides of the aisle grappled with the tough issues we and the Iraqi people face in a dynamic discussion. BBG seeks to set a standard of solid journalism in a region where a history of government controlled media has left the public cynical and journalists too often seem to equate strident criticism of the United States with “independent” reporting.

The BBG describes “marrying the mission to the market” as “the fundamental strategy of U.S. international broadcasting today.” The BBG must determine how it can best reach large audiences in complex, competitive media environments with news as well as “perspectives on American culture and information on official U.S. Government positions and policies.” The task is complicated by what is becoming an increasingly varied Middle Eastern broadcasting scene. While government-owned media still dominate national land-based TV and radio, satellite technology has created new stations that are competing vigorously.

We will ask a number of questions. In our first panel discussion with Mr. Tomlinson, Mr. Pattiz and Mr. Harb, we will examine Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa as examples of innovation at the BBG. What media are most influential in the Middle East now: TV, radio, newspapers, the Internet? How does the BBG identify its audience? How is the audience segmented? How does BBG select the media and programming to reach the various audiences? How does BBG measure success? Might BBG’s success in certain markets slow the growth of free, fair, open and privately owned local stations?

On the second panel, Mr. Ford will give us an overview of GAO’s recent work on the BBG. Dr. Telhami, Ambassador Rugh and Dr. Ghareeb are uniquely qualified to further our understanding of the political environment and media marketplace in which Alhurra and Radio Sawa operate. All three are distinguished authors with long experience in the region. What are the political as well as commercial dynamics of broadcasting companies in the Middle East now? What do journalists in the region see as their role and responsibilities? What are attitudes toward the U.S.? What do people think of Alhurra and Radio Sawa? How can the U.S. most effectively promote the development of free, fair and open media in the Middle East? How might Alhurra and Radio Sawa contribute to those goals?

I would like to offer Senators Biden and Nelson a chance to make opening remarks, and then let us begin with Mr. Tomlinson. To ensure as much time as possible for discussion, I would ask witnesses to confine their remarks to about five minutes. Their testimony can be entered in the record in full.

**STATEMENT OF HON. KENNETH Y. TOMLINSON, CHAIRMAN,
BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr. TOMLINSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be brief. You have the statement for the record.

I will point out that Norm Pattiz has both a film which is going to be fascinating insight into Alhurra, our new television voice, but we also have preliminary survey data from the region to show the kind of quick impact we have had in the region, as well as definitive survey data from Nielsen demonstrating the extraordinary success of Radio Sawa.

I will also point out that last night for the first time in 19 years, Norm Pattiz was not court side for a Lakers playoff game, which is an indication of the seriousness that he has brought to the table here. Because I assure you that in past years, he never would have missed a playoff game for such a hearing.

To my left is Mouafac Harb, who is News Director of Radio Sawa and News Director of Alhurra. I was walking down the hallway of VOA today and someone stopped me and said, you know, I think Mouafac Harb might be the most important single person involved

in broadcasting public diplomacy, and I really could not disagree with that. I am honored to be with both of these gentlemen.

On February 14 of this year, with the enthusiastic support of President Bush and key leaders of the administration and the Congress, BBG launched its new Arabic language television network called Alhurra. Alhurra was created out in northern Virginia in a little more than 4 months, a state-of-the-art studio that we would be proud for anyone to see. But on that day that as we opened with the magnificent sets that Norm Pattiz was responsible for putting together, the extraordinary thing to me was the sea of Middle Eastern faces—news men, news women enthusiastically working to make this network a successful model of journalistic standards in this world.

President Bush spoke of open debate and truth when he described what this network can mean to the people of the Middle East. The network will challenge the voices of hate and repression with truth and the voices of tolerance and moderation. Viewers will witness free and open discussions not just about the conflict in the Middle East, but also about subjects critical to that region's future—economic development, human rights, respect for minorities.

Our competitive edge in the Middle East is our dedication to truth and free and open debate. People have asked from the beginning how in the world will you guys be able to compete with Al Jazeera and others out there. I contend that time and again Radio Sawa is demonstrating that it is first-rate. If you give accurate news, if people come to depend on the news, if they hear free and open debate, they will come to such a station.

We are also proud of what we have done in other aspects of international broadcasting. Voice of America has been active in a number of different areas, which we will mention as we go along today. Especially important at Voice of America is a new daily news program to Iran, obviously, in Persian. It has been a terrific success and we are proud of it.

Now, Radio Sawa has been a phenomenal success, and Norm will have a lot to say about that in terms of the Nielsen survey.

We were asked repeatedly on Alhurra how are you going to know anyone is listening to you. I have never been involved in a project that I had more faith was going to be a success than the Alhurra project, but I am glad that we have some quick survey data indicating the initial impact. We will have more data in the summer. I am an old print journalist and my attitude, Mr. Chairman, toward some of this is the attitude of Mark Twain who said, "figures lie and liars figure." But we do need the statistical indication of our presence there, and that we will give you today.

The board also has been involved, in addition to our Persian initiative, in expansions at VOA in Indonesia. We have an important new service to Pakistan in Urdu language broadcasting that our colleague Steve Simmons of the Board of Governors has been a great force behind.

We have a lot to tell you about and we look forward to your questions.

I will end on just one quick note. We are frequently asked about coordination. We are frequently asked about the way we work with other aspects of the administration. Of course, Senator Biden,

being the father of this broadcast board, put together a force that would, in fact, be a firewall and serve a unique role in communications around the world. But I have served four administrations in Washington, as the Director of the Voice of America, a member of the BIB board and the like, and I have never seen a better working relationship between the White House and international broadcasting than we have now. We have the White House Office of Global Communications to thank for that. They were enormously supportive and helpful in developing what we are doing at Alhurra.

Let me close on this. We need to understand the importance of maintaining the strength of public diplomacy and the traditions of international broadcasting. I am convinced we will not be successful in our overall mission of delivering our message to the world if we fail to grasp that these are two different spheres and that they operate according to two different sets of rules.

It is very important that government spokesmen take America's message to the world passionately and relentlessly. We should not be ashamed of public advocacy on behalf of freedom and democracy and the United States of America. International broadcasting, on a parallel and complementary track, is called upon to reflect the highest standards of independent journalism as the best means of demonstrating to international audiences that truth is on the side of democratic values.

We in America are fortunate that telling the truth works to our long-term advantage. That is why international broadcasting, I believe, is so important in this country.

We thank you for the invitation. We look forward to answering your questions, and I look forward to Norm's presentation because he usually does a pretty good job.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tomlinson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. KENNETH Y. TOMLINSON

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, we greatly appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to talk about the efforts of the Broadcasting Board of Governors to communicate with the people in the Islamic world. I am joined by fellow board member Norman Pattiz, the father of Radio Sawa and an irreplaceable force for international broadcasting, and by Mouafac Harb, the News Director for the Middle East Television Network. Together we hope to give you a full picture of the BBG's efforts to assist the war on terrorism, and become a continuously available source of news for the people of the Middle East.

As this committee well knows, the BBG has greatly expanded its reach and broadcast hours to the Islamic world in the past three years. There has been literally an enormous increase in the availability of U.S.-sponsored news and information on radio and television to this region. Radio Sawa, Radio Farda, VOA-TV's Persian programming, and now the Middle East Television Network (MTN) are relative newcomers on the scene, but are making a big impact.

On February 14 of this year, with the enthusiastic support of President Bush and key leaders of the Administration and Congress, the BBG launched its new Arabic-language television network called "Alhurra" ("The Free One" in Arabic). Even before this station went on the air, it was heavily criticized in the Arab world as a propaganda arm of the U.S. Government. It has been called a "voice of the CIA" whose aim is to "brainwash Arabs" and described as part of "a long-term plan to dominate the minds and ideas of Iraqis and Arabs." But Alhurra is none of these things. Its mission is that of all U.S. international broadcasting—to promote and sustain freedom and democracy by broadcasting accurate and objective news and information about the United States and the world.

Through its adherence to Western journalistic standards, through its objective, accurate reporting, Alhurra can gain the credibility we need to build an audience and offer Middle Eastern audiences a new balanced view of world events. While criticism in the Arab press continues, we are connecting with the people—our target audi-

ence—and they are sending us hundreds of e-mails to welcome us. “You are much needed to balance biased news controlled by those full of hatred to western world,” reads one. “This is the first step to fight the ‘hate culture’ that feeds terrorism,” says another. “I hope your channel [will help] our Arab brothers . . . to tell the truth from all that is going on.”

In a little more than four months, the BBG established a state-of-the-art broadcast facility in Northern Virginia to house Alhurra. Since October some 900,000 feet of cable have been installed in this facility. But what is truly extraordinary is the sea of Middle Eastern faces—newsmen and newswomen—enthusiastically working to make this network a successful model of journalistic standards. Many of these individuals are well known media figures in the Middle East and gave up promising careers overseas to practice journalism with MTN.

President Bush spoke of “open debate” and “truth” when he described what this network can mean to the people of the Middle East. The network will challenge the voices of hate and repression with truth and the voices of tolerance and moderation. Viewers will witness free and open discussions, not just about conflict in the Middle East, but also about subjects critical to that region’s future—economic development, human rights and respect for minorities.

Our competitive edge in the Middle East is our dedication to truth and free and open debate. We will provide an example of democracy and a free press in a media market dominated by sensationalism and distortion. That is also the basis for the success of the Voice of America’s new Persian-language satellite television program “News and Views” to the people of Iran. Less than three months after that program was launched last summer, one independent survey showed “News and Views” was reaching a remarkable 12 percent of the country’s over-18 population.

Typical of what creative broadcasting can do is the new segment launched by “News and Views” called “Your Voice.” Iranian viewers were invited to submit e-mails on the controversy surrounding the February 20th parliamentary elections—from the banning of candidates to calls for an election boycott. We opened a dialogue that is allowing Iranians to share their views with other Iranians—and the response has been extraordinary.

My predecessors likewise brought innovation to our radio broadcasts that proved to be vital to the success of our Afghan Radio Network which broadcasts in Dari and Pashto, our youth-oriented Radio Farda to Iran, and Radio Sawa to the Arab world. When Norm Pattiz was in the process of creating Radio Sawa, he traveled throughout the Middle East to negotiate heretofore unattainable agreements for American AM and FM transmitters in Middle Eastern countries so that we could be heard on the radios of choice in the region.

Radio Sawa has been a phenomenal success. A survey by ACNielsen research last fall demonstrated that Sawa has achieved market dominance—an average listenership of 42 percent in the important age group between 15 and 29—in key Middle Eastern countries.

Radio Sawa faced the same skepticism as Alhurra before it was launched. Critics conceded Arabs might listen to our music, but not our news. Yet this same ACNielsen survey found that, in a region where skepticism towards the U.S. is high and boycotts of U.S. products are common, Radio Sawa was found to be a reliable source of news and information by 73 percent of its weekly listenership.

In a matter of months, Sawa built the largest radio news-gathering operation in the Middle East presenting up-to-the minute news 24 hours a day and over 325 newscasts per week. It was the very reliability of our Sawa news that made us the leading source for news in Iraq even as we went to war there.

News also accounts for the surprising audience that ACNielsen documented for Sawa among older listeners in target countries in the Middle East—better than 20 percent among the general population over 30. Mr. Chairman, I will submit for the record highlights of this survey.

Under the leadership of Mouafac Harb, Sawa’s outstanding News Director who also assumes that post for Alhurra, the station also is the source of a host of shows that explore freedom and democracy.

In Indonesia, the Voice of America has enhanced its radio and TV offerings to reach this large Islamic population. “Jurnal VOA,” a 25-minute live, interactive news program, appears on Indonesia’s “Metro TV.” Another TV offering, “Doing Business,” airs every Monday on TVRI. “VOA Direct Connection,” a half-hour weekly radio program, airs each Friday evening on more than 40 satellite affiliates around Indonesia.

This month, we launched a new one-hour interactive talk show, “Salam VOA,” that will air on JTV in Surabaya. In addition, VOA will supply Trans TV with a weekly 5-minute U.S. election wrap-up, to air on its morning news program. We an-

ticipate doubling our radio broadcasts to five hours a day and increasing TV from one to five hours a week.

The Board's latest initiative is a new youth-oriented Urdu broadcast to Pakistan where listeners would be served contemporary Pakistani and western music along with news and current affairs features and subjects ranging from education to business to health. We hope to increase our hours of broadcast as well as the power of our broadcasts to this key country in the war on terrorism.

Just this week we began broadcasting to Iraq over channel 12 in Baghdad, available through terrestrial transmission. Iraqis also have access to Alhurra's programming delivered via Arabsat. In the weeks ahead, we will be phasing in special programming for Iraq, including newscasts, talk shows and roundtables. Additional terrestrial transmitters in Basra and three other cities should be on-line in the near future.

Much of criticism of Alhurra—again before we even launched—was that we would be the mouthpiece of the U.S. Government, sending cleared messages and propaganda to taint Arab minds. None of our programming in any part of the world seeks to do this. VOA's long-standing Charter, and more recently the U.S. International Broadcasting Act, guard against this. But we must demonstrate this every day to our audiences and earn their trust and loyalty over time. This does not mean that we ignore our mission to promote and sustain freedom and democracy. Our programming frequently features U.S. policymakers and programming that accurately explains the U.S. policy measures that so often are maligned in the Middle East.

In continuing all of our broadcast initiatives, we will strive to give our listeners the same tool we have always provided through international broadcasting: the information they need to compare their political, economic, and social systems to those that exist elsewhere in the world, and to assess their own leadership.

In creating a broadcast environment that also reflects the foreign policy priorities of the United States, we look to the Department of State for guidance, expertise, and participation in our programs. I have served four Administrations in Washington—all of them connected with international broadcasting. Never have I seen a better working relationship between the White House, the State Department; and international broadcasting.

The White House Office of Global Communications has been extraordinarily supportive in helping us assess priorities and expand what we are doing as in Middle East Television. This office also has been a major enabler in helping the BBG to gain access to policy makers for interviews on major world events.

Under Secretary Margaret Tutwiler, who represents the Secretary at Board meetings, has been deeply interested in broadcasting's strategic goals and priorities and is a full participant in Board decision-making. Our diplomats overseas also have helped us gain valuable transmission resources in countries to which we broadcast.

We need to understand the importance of maintaining the strength of public diplomacy and the traditions of international broadcasting. I am convinced that we will not be successful in our overall mission of delivering our message to the world if we fail to grasp that these are two different spheres and that they operate according to two different sets of rules.

It is very important that government spokesmen take America's message to the world—passionately and relentlessly. We should not be ashamed of public advocacy on behalf of freedom and democracy and the United States of America. International broadcasting, on a parallel and complementary track, is called upon to reflect the highest standards of independent journalism as the best means of demonstrating to international audiences that truth is on the side of democratic values.

Thirty years ago, RFE/RL and VOA began broadcasting the Watergate hearings. Those broadcasts caused heartburn for many in Washington, but looking back we see they constituted a veritable civics lesson on the importance of separation of powers and rule of law. Over the years I have heard so many citizens of post-communist countries tell how those broadcasts helped them understand the real meaning of freedom and democracy. Alhurra is fortunate to make its debut in a Presidential election year. It will cover the U.S. race from one end to the other, showing day by day how our election process works.

We in America are fortunate that telling the truth works to our long-term advantage. That is why international broadcasting is so important to this country.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my formal statement. I will be happy to answer any questions that your subcommittee might have.

Alhurra and Radio Sawa: Progress Report

Alhurra viewership based on telephone surveys among households with satellite reception conducted by IPSOS-STAT in major cities in Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Kuwait, and Jordan April, 2004.

Radio Sawa listening rates based on surveys conducted by ACNielsen in Egypt, UAE, Kuwait, Jordan and Morocco in February 2004 and Qatar July-August 2003



Alhurra Viewership

10

الحرة
ALHURRA

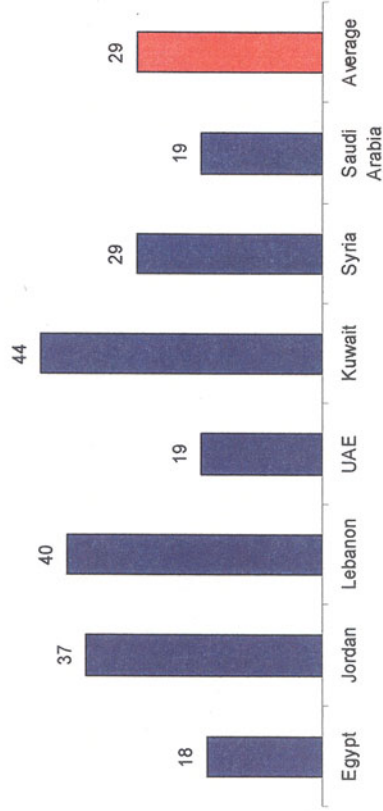
The Alhurra Strategy

- Fulfill the promise of Alhurra ("The Free One") -- to be a balanced source of news and information for the Middle East TV viewer, giving a variety of opinions, including moderate ones, a chance to be heard.
- Seek a mass audience of all adult Arabs -- 90% of whom get their news from TV; 40% (70 million) of whom have access to satellite TV.
- Broadcast accurate news through newscasts twice an hour and two one-hour newscasts each evening in prime time, supplemented by live coverage of breaking news when warranted.
- Cover U.S. policies and actions in full, including newsmaker interviews.
- Probe vital issues of the day with talk shows, magazines, roundtable discussions, and debates.
- Leverage TV as a medium of programs to target specific audience segments with a dynamic mix of shows -- health and personal fitness, entertainment news, sports, fashion, and science and technology -- to deliver the largest possible audience for the core news mission.
- Complement Radio Sawa in a comprehensive BBG regional strategy.

Alhurra Weekly Viewership

(% viewership among adults 15+ in satellite reception households)

Within two months of its first broadcast, Alhurra has quickly established itself as a player among satellite stations in the Middle East, reaching an average of 29% of the satellite-equipped households surveyed in the region.



(Average is computed from the unweighted sum of the seven surveys.)

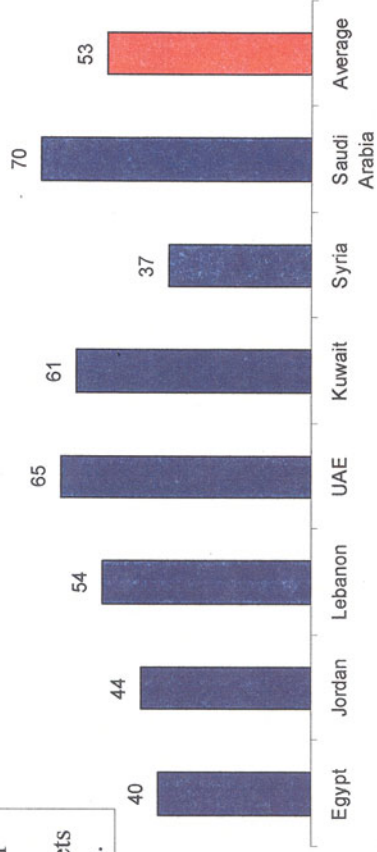
Alhurra as a Reliable News Source

Q. "Do you think the news on Alhurra is very reliable, somewhat reliable, neither reliable nor unreliable, somewhat unreliable, or very unreliable?"

% of weekly Alhurra viewers answering 'very' or 'somewhat' reliable

Alhurra is working to establish itself as a reliable source of news in very competitive markets across the region.

13



(Average is computed from the unweighted sum of the seven surveys.)

Notes on the Alhurra Research

- Telephone interviews conducted in Arabic among urban households having satellite reception first half of April 2004.
- Sample size of 3,588 households, distributed as follows: Egypt (502 in Cairo and Alexandria), Jordan (500 in Amman, Irbid and Zarka), UAE (527 in Abu Dhabi and Dubai), Lebanon (536 in Beirut), Kuwait (502 in Kuwait City), Saudi Arabia (502 in Riyadh and Jeddah), Syria (519 in Damascus and Aleppo).
- The results from these urban surveys cannot be projected to the national populations of these countries as they were conducted in major cities and were not intended to be national in scope.

Radio Sawa Listenership

15



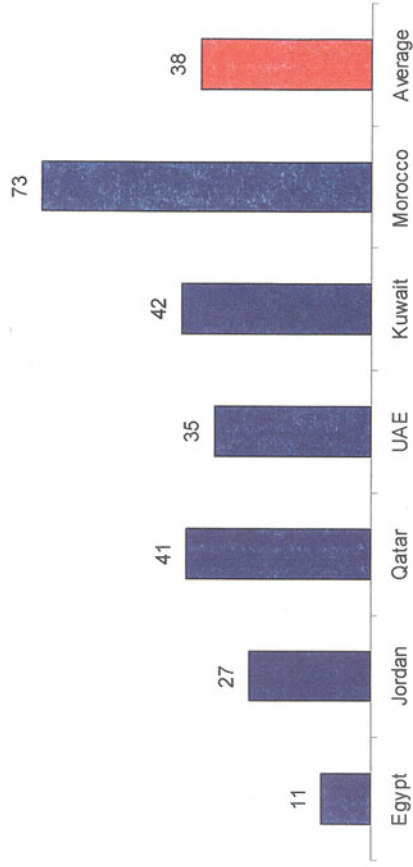
The Sawa Strategy

- Target youth throughout the region -- 70% of the population is under 30.
- Reach the largest possible audience for the news and information mission by attracting listeners with a unique Arabic-Western music format presented in a fresh, upbeat American style.
- Broadcast unvarnished, unbiased news.
- Cover U.S. policies and actions in full, including newsmaker interviews.
- Create customized programming streams for the different sub-regions of the Arab world.
- Engage the audience with dynamic, interactive features such as "Sawa Chat."
- Become part of the daily lives of our listeners with the 24/7 presence of a modern radio station.
- Deliver the programming via the channels -- FM, AM, digital satellite -- that the audience uses and we control.

Radio Sawa Weekly Listenership

(% listening among the general population 15+)

Radio Sawa is now the leading international broadcaster in each of these countries and competes head to head with the top domestic stations. (Radio Sawa on FM in all countries except Egypt which is covered via AM only.)

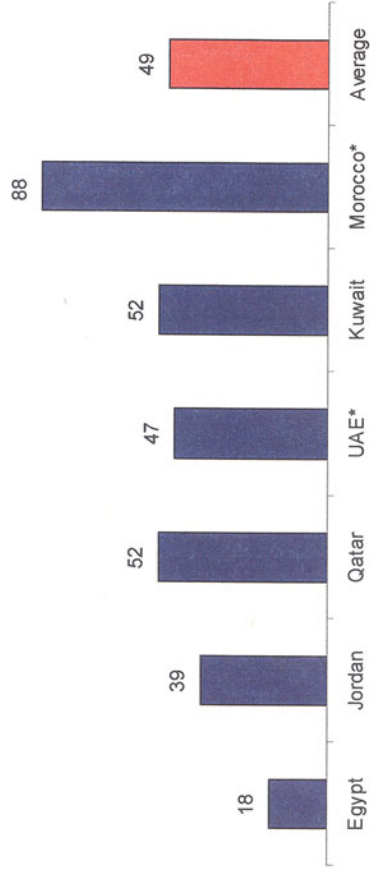


(Average is computed from the unweighted sum of the six surveys.)

Radio Sawa Weekly Listenership

(% listening among the general population 15-29)

Radio Sawa is even stronger with its 15-29 core target audience



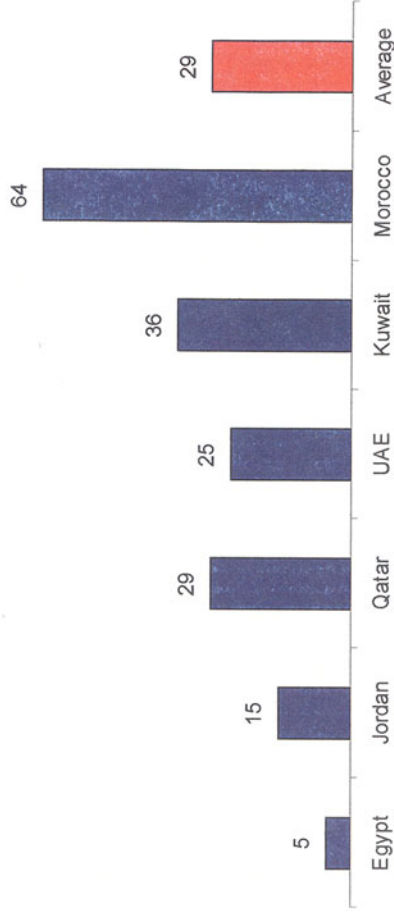
* Moroccan data covers Rabat and Casablanca, UAE data covers Abu Dhabi and Dubai

(Average is computed from the unweighted sum of the six surveys.)

Radio Sawa Weekly Listenership

(% listening among the general population 30+)

Radio Sawa goes well beyond its target, reaching substantial audiences above the age of 30.

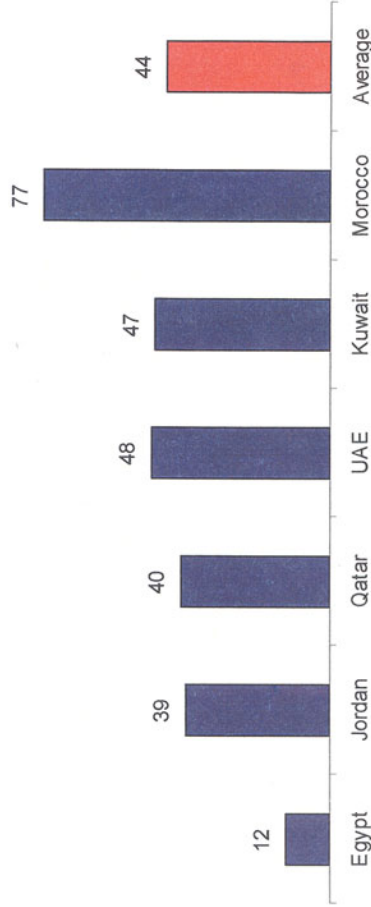


(Average is computed from the unweighted sum of the six surveys.)

Radio Sawa Weekly Listenership

(% listening among "elites" -- social classes "A&B")

Radio Sawa also delivers the elite listeners. Social classes 'A&B' refer to society's well-educated managers and professionals *per* the industry-standard A-E classification of the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR).



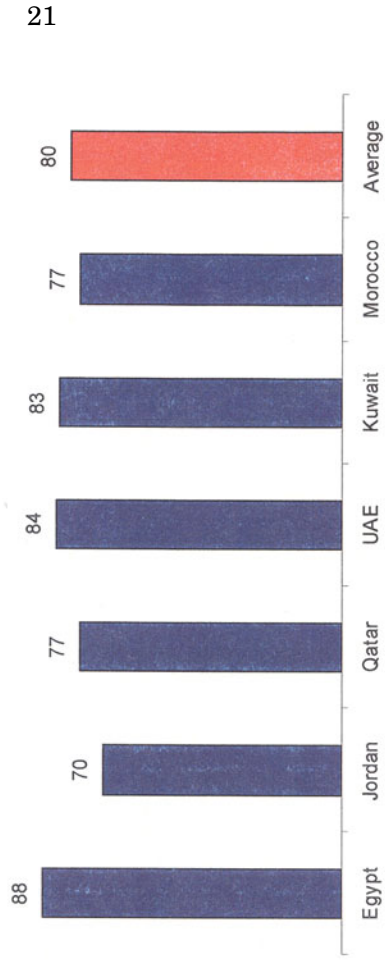
(Average is computed from the unweighted sum of the six surveys.)

Radio Sawa as a Reliable News Source

Q. "How reliable is the news and information one can hear on Radio Sawa?"

% of weekly Sawa listeners answering 'very' or 'somewhat' reliable

Radio Sawa not only delivers large audiences but succeeds in fulfilling its core news mission.

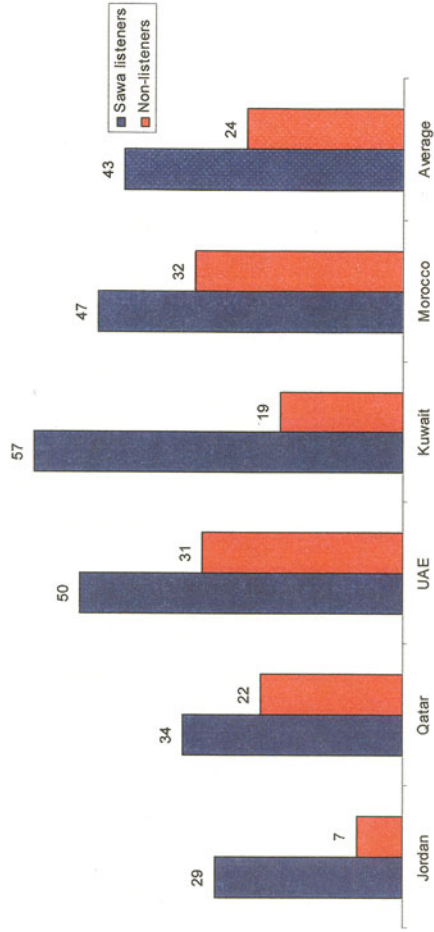


(Average is computed from the unweighted sum of the six surveys.)

Views of the USA among Radio Sawa Listeners and Non-Listeners

Q. ‘How favorably or unfavorably inclined are you personally toward the USA?’
 % responding ‘very’ or ‘somewhat favorable’ among weekly Sawa listeners and non-listeners

(Question not asked in Egypt because of political sensitivities)



(Average is computed from the unweighted sum of the five surveys.)

Notes on the Sawa Research

- Face-to-face interviews conducted in Arabic February 2004, (Qatar July-August 2003).
- Sample size of 5737 adults 15+, distributed as follows: Egypt (1522), Jordan (1251), UAE (1200), Qatar (998), Kuwait (768) Morocco-Casablanca and Rabat (1000).
- 50% men and 50% women representative of key demographic groups in terms of social class, education, employment, size and type of household.
- Margin of error: +/- 2.9%.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you, Mr. Tomlinson.

At this time, I would like to call on the subcommittee's ranking member, Senator Nelson, for his opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BILL NELSON

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A large scale international television and the Internet, I think, is essential in winning the war on terrorism. When we hear the commentary in the last few days of what is, in fact, happening on the ground being, to be charitable, misconstrued by some of the Arab television networks, it becomes all the more important that the interests of the free world have an ability to communicate with people of different civilizations.

So in the course of this hearing, which I am going to have to be in and out of, Mr. Chairman, we are going to be examining whether investment and recapitalization of the transmission capabilities are needed and increasing our television programming and broadening our outreach to the Muslim world. This is most timely that you are having this subcommittee hearing.

We have already expanded our services to the region in Arabic and Persian. This committee is one which voted to increase the President's budget for broadcasting when we moved the Foreign Assistance Authorization Act earlier this year.

So thank you for the opportunity and I thank the witnesses for coming and testifying to us.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

At this time, we are pleased to take the testimony from Norman Pattiz. Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF HON. NORMAN J. PATTIZ, GOVERNOR,
BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr. PATTIZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, Senator Nelson. It is a pleasure to be here.

I will just expand on what Chairman Tomlinson said about my missing the first Lakers playoff game in 18 years in order to be here. That is true, but I am a broadcaster by trade and I considered this an honor and a privilege to have been appointed by two Presidents of different parties to do something that is arguably more important than it has ever been, or as important as it has ever been certainly in our history, that takes advantage of what I have done for a living all my life in a country that has been very, very good to me. So go Lakers, but priorities are priorities, and this is where I need to be and this where I am.

I got involved in the Broadcasting Board of Governors about 3 years ago. I was sworn-in in November of 2000, and at the time, I was the only broadcaster on the board. I am happy to say that we now have a number of people with broadcast and journalism experience, but I was the only broadcaster. As such, I was asked to serve as the co-chair of the Language Review Committee, which is the committee that is mandated by Congress to, on an annual basis, look at how we deploy our resources across the 60-plus language services that we broadcast in every year.

One area stood out when I was taking a look at the various areas that we were funding, not because of what we were doing, but be-

cause of what we were not doing. That area was the Middle East. At the time, our total commitment to the Middle East was 7 hours a day of Arabic language programming from the Voice of America Arabic Service, transmitted on short wave which practically nobody listened to, on a very weak medium wave signal out of the Island of Rhodes. That was our commitment to Middle East broadcasting.

I reported that to the board and the board in so many words said, congratulations, Norm, good job. We are now forming a Middle East committee. You will be the chairman of it. Go fix it.

So within a month, I was on my way to the Middle East with some staffers to assess what was possible in the region, and a lot was possible. But first, impressions of what was going on in the region. Taking a look at the media environment in the region—and I am not saying this is what takes place in every aspect of the media environment—it is not uncommon at all to hear hate-speak on radio and television, incitement to violence, disinformation, government censorship, and journalistic self-censorship. It is within that environment that the Arab street gets its impressions not only of U.S. policy, which they despise, but of our culture, our society, our people, our values. We thought we needed to do a much better job of presenting accurately what our policies are so that our audiences could make more informed decisions. And we need to reach the largest possible audience that we could reach.

There was a tremendous opportunity with Radio Sawa, which at the time we did not know was going to be “Radio Sawa.” We knew it was going to be something in Arabic on the radio.

I met with heads of state, ministers of information, academics, journalists. We did some focus groups in several countries. And it was obvious that there was an opportunity to reach a very large percentage of the population, the largest percentage of the population actually, which is the 30 and under segment that is underserved by the media and is incredibly important to the long-term interests of the United States. By putting something on the air that was contemporary; that took advantage of the best in Western broadcasting techniques and technology; that utilized AM, FM, digital audio, satellite technology; and that fulfills the role of “marrying the mission to the market;” we attracted an audience for our primary mission, which is a journalistic mission.

So we put Radio Sawa on the air, which was a mix of Western and Arabic music, heavily researched. Let me just say that Radio Sawa and Alhurra are the most researched projects in the history of international broadcasting. The fact of the matter is I cannot do a project if I do not have the research with which to determine what the opportunities are within the marketplace, who it is we are trying to reach, who it is we are trying to communicate with, and what those messages ought to be. If you do not have that, then you are shooting blanks.

So we got a lot of information to find out what it would take to resonate with our audience because radio, unlike television, is a very different medium. Radio is a medium of formats, and people tend to listen to their favorite radio stations to the exclusion of other radio stations. Television is very different. It is a medium of programs, and consequently, people tune into various programs at various times because they want to see those programs. But they

are not intrinsically loyal to a particular television station. It does not define who they are. It is different with radio. A lot of people define who they are by the radio station they listen to. I dare say if I stepped into any one of your automobiles today and checked the settings on your radios, I would know something about who it was who was driving that car.

So radio has a very unique way of connecting primarily with the 30 and under audience, and Radio Sawa has used all of that knowledge that we have to deliver a very, very large audience to news and information that is second to none. We broadcast over 5 hours of original news and informational programming every single day. We break for special events when events on the ground warrant it. We will go for 4, 5, 6 hours continuously in order to fulfill our journalistic mission. And from the very beginning, we knew that Sawa was going to be successful based upon the original research that we were doing and the tracking research that we do on a regular basis.

We have had a lot of negative information passed around in the press in the Middle East and some over here about the chances for success of Alhurra. I have not been too terribly concerned about that, nor do I think the chairman or Mouafac have been terribly concerned about that, because frankly it is everything we heard about Radio Sawa. The difference is when we started Radio Sawa, we did it market by market, and when we started Alhurra, we did it via satellite throughout the whole region. So the entire media world knew we were coming and had their thoughts, and they were giving us their thoughts well in advance of us even being on the air.

Having said that, knowing that these are supposed to be brief remarks—and I have probably worn out my welcome and there is a short video we want to show you—I want to give you some information that has just been completed on Radio Sawa and on Alhurra. We have been doing research on Sawa for a number of years now. Well, for 2 years. We have been on the air for 2 years. And Sawa has shown that it can generate a significant audience, and we have the research result—and I believe we have supplied it to the committee—of the latest Nielsen study showing that Sawa, in terms of 15-plus numbers, has a very large share across the region. In terms of its target audience numbers, it has an even larger share across the region. In terms of reliability and credibility, it is viewed very highly by its listeners for the reliability and credibility of the news, coming from an obviously American radio station.

I will just say this. Shortly after going on the air in Amman, Jordan, we did a research study that showed that within 30 days Sawa was the favorite radio station of over 50 percent of our target audience and was listened to weekly by 90 percent of our target audience. But in terms of news credibility, only 1 percent of our audience, a month after it went on the air, thought we were reliable and credible. Six months later, we still had those large numbers for “favorite radio station” and those large numbers of people who were listening every week, but in terms of news and information reliability and credibility, the number had gone up to 40 percent.

So the point is to those people who will say if you cannot trust the messenger, do not trust the message—our mission is to walk

the walk. Our mission is to give them an example of what a free press is in the American tradition, and we have demonstrated with Radio Sawa that they will listen and they will be affected. As a matter of fact, that same Nielsen research shows that, by a margin of about 2 to 1, slightly under 2 to 1, Radio Sawa listeners have a more positive view of the United States of America than do non-Radio Sawa listeners.

This is a long-term project. We are late in the game. Nothing is going to get changed overnight, but I think we are definitely having an effect with Sawa.

As far as Alhurra is concerned, since we have demonstrated the fact that a U.S.-sponsored radio station can be viewed as reliable and credible and very popular amongst its audience, then we ought to engage in television where the real game is taking place and where 90 percent of the Arab population gets its news and information.

So we have put together a 21st century news and information-driven television station. It is news and information-driven but it is not all news and information. We also have magazine shows. We have travel shows, shows on health and fitness, shows on fashion, shows on food, a number of different kinds of programming to attract a wider body of viewers so that we can affect them with our news and information programming.

Every hour at the top of the hour and at the bottom of the hour, we do news even when we are doing the programming that is not primarily news and information. In prime time, we do two 1-hour live newscasts. Obviously, we break for breaking stories, as we have done on many occasions over the last few weeks, to cover the breaking stories that are going on within the region.

But the question that we get asked over and over again, even though we have only been on the air for 2 months and we have only been 24 hours for about 3 weeks, is who is listening, who is watching. Well, it is early. We have research in the field right now that will ask many, many, many questions. But in order to get a feel for where we are, we contracted with Ipsos-Stat, which is the French company that does research in the Middle East and provides much of the audience research for television throughout the Middle East. We contracted with them to do a telephone survey in several cities throughout the region to get a sense of whether or not people had even heard of us, whether people were watching us, and what they felt about us.

This is very preliminary stuff, and it is really the information that we would normally just use internally to let us know how we are doing and what we need to focus on. But it came back a few days ago, and I wanted to share it with you because, quite frankly, it is very impressive. It is more impressive than we anticipated.

This is a telephone survey, so it is people who have telephones and it is also people who have access to satellite television. Now, you have 300 million people in the region. And 170 million of them are over the age of 15, and about 40 percent of those people have satellite access. So you are talking about in excess of 70 million people here. So this is a big chunk of people.

In taking a look at individual cities, let me just tell you which cities we looked at because I am going to mention them by country.

But I want you to know which cities we actually looked at because these are more city numbers than country numbers. In Egypt, we surveyed Cairo and Alexandria. In Jordan, we surveyed Amman, Irbid, and Zarka. In the Emirates, we surveyed Abu Dhabi and Dubai. In Lebanon, Beirut. Kuwait, Kuwait City. Saudi Arabia, Jeddah and Riyadh. Syria, Damascus and Aleppo.

The information is as follows. In terms of weekly listening, persons 15-plus, in Egypt, 18 percent; in Jordan, 37 percent; in Lebanon, 40 percent; in the Emirates, 19 percent; in Kuwait, 44 percent; in Syria, 29 percent; and in Saudi Arabia, 19 percent. These are significant numbers for a station that has been on the air for a very, very short time, and has only been on the air 24 hours a day for a very, very short period of time.

The fact that we got all that negative publicity was probably a blessing in disguise. I think it is very interesting that they issued a fatwah against us in Saudi Arabia, yet in spite of that, we can show that 19 percent answered affirmatively.

Let me give you a sense of news reliability because we asked those same people how reliable do you feel the news on Alhurra is. In the categories of "very reliable" and "somewhat reliable," in Egypt, 40 percent said reliable; in Jordan, 44 percent; in Lebanon, 54 percent; in the United Arab Emirates, 65 percent; in Kuwait, 61 percent; in Syria, 37 percent; and in Saudi Arabia, 70 percent.

So this is real, real preliminary stuff, but it is an indicator and it is a good indicator. We are there, and we are a player in this marketplace right now. We will have full and complete research within the next 45 to 60 days which is being done right now, and then we will have another Nielsen survey which we will be doing in June and July.

With your indulgence, what I would like to do is direct your attention to that monitor over there and give you a sense of what this station looks like. We have taken a short promotional video and edited it down to an even shorter promotional video with some English narration, and added some recent coverage in the American media—a piece that was done on the News Hour that shows you how the American media has covered what we are doing—and then some very quick cuts of our people in the field doing the various types of programming, the live news, the roundtable discussions, the interviews, and so forth. This piece runs just a little bit over 3 minutes, so with your indulgence, Mr. Chairman, I would like to play that for you.

Senator NELSON. Was that fatwah issued with the approval of the Government of Saudi Arabia?

Mr. HARB. I do not think it was, but the person who issued the fatwah is a government employee.

Senator NELSON. It was.

Mr. HARB. Yes, sir.

Mr. PATTIZ. He is a government employee. I do not know that you could get the Saudi Arabian Government to say it issued a fatwah, but this is a religious leader who is in the employ of the Saudi Government.

Senator NELSON. And did that fatwah get issued before the most recent bombing in Saudi Arabia?

Mr. PATTIZ. I think it was issued before we ever hit the air. Do not watch, do not participate, do not buy commercials, which I thought was interesting since we are non-commercial. If memory serves me, that was something that was issued before we had even started broadcasting on February 14, or at least shortly thereafter.

Senator NELSON. Maybe they are changing their tune, Mr. Chairman, after the most recent bombing.

[Video shown.]

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pattiz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. NORMAN J. PATTIZ

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I welcome the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss our most recent programs in the Middle East and to give you a quick video glimpse of some of the stories covered by Alhurra as well as the quality of its production.

As Mr. Tomlinson mentioned, Alhurra has been on the air for just over two months. We have plunged into a Middle East media environment that is rich in satellite programming and critical, breaking news. But it is not an environment that is steeped in same traditions of journalism and objective news analysis that we are familiar with. Television and radio broadcasters in the region are, for the most part, government owned, and reflect a particular point of view that can be destructive to opinion about the United States. We hope to make a difference by filling the gap in accurate, objective news coverage.

Before I play the short video clip on Alhurra, I would like to emphasize that the products the BBG has initiated over the past three years were heavily researched before we invested in them. We believe we can be most successful when we tailor our program mix to the audience we are trying to reach, using music and other non-news feature programming when appropriate. We must also broadcast in a manner that is sensitive to the culture and traditions of our audiences. Our formats must be appealing, and our programs compelling and technologically state-of-the-art in order to compete. In the Middle East, while audiences lack objective information about the United States and our leadership in the world, there is no lack of satellite stations that are competing with us for the same audience. We must set ourselves apart, and I believe that Radio Sawa and Alhurra television are doing that.

For the development of Radio Sawa, we traveled to the region and identified a target audience of the large portion of the population that is under the age of 35. We researched what programming would draw them to an AM or FM station, and when we found they would be attracted by modern music, we researched their music preferences. This music-based format, along with features designed to appeal to young audiences, provides the foundation for our news and information programming. So far, it has worked. As Chairman Tomlinson mentioned in his statement, the audience listens, and they listen for the news.

Let me add another survey result to what you have already heard about Sawa listening. In a survey conducted in Morocco—Radio Sawa's newest market in the Middle East—in February 2004, Nielsen found that 72 percent of the general population over the age of 15 listened to Radio Sawa. Sawa is even stronger in its 15 to 29 core age group. Among this market segment, Sawa showed a listening rate of 87.5 percent. The rate of listening among audiences over the age of 30 is 63.5 percent, and 77 percent of weekly listeners found Sawa's news reliable.

The success of Radio Sawa helped fuel the creation of Alhurra, our television broadcast to the Middle East. After funding first became available in April 2003, we assembled a highly skilled team of professionals to take on the daunting task of getting a 24 hour a day station on the air by the beginning of 2004. After months of overcoming the many daily challenges that came our way, we launched the program on February 14. We believe we have a sophisticated product that will compete favorably with the well-established, and well-funded, satellite stations that exist in the region.

The BBG's use of research also applies to program delivery, which can also pose major diplomatic and engineering challenges. As you know, we are navigating a world where all transmission options are not uniformly available or utilized in every region. Not only do we "marry the mission to the market" when we develop our program content, but we also do so when we choose transmission options. Some markets still require shortwave delivery. Other markets, as in the Middle East and surrounding regions, are much like the U.S. market: they listen to AM and FM radio, and get much of their news from television. Gaining access to AM and FM fre-

quencies requires permission from foreign governments to install or lease transmission within their boundaries. Intense effort from the BBG, together with committed assistance from the State Department, has provided a network of about 20 AM and FM transmitters from Morocco to Kuwait to support Radio Sawa, and is working to establish terrestrial transmission in Iraq.

I'd now like to play a short video which will give you a clear idea of the substance and flavor of Alhurra.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you very much for your presentation.
Mr. Harb, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF MOUAFAC HARB, NEWS DIRECTOR, ALHURRA,
MIDDLE EAST TELEVISION NETWORK, BROADCASTING
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr. HARB. On behalf of my colleagues at Radio Sawa and Alhurra, I thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am honored to have been given a role in establishing both Radio Sawa and Alhurra television. We have been fortunate in the leadership and support we have received from the administration, Congress, and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

It has been deeply satisfying to see Sawa and Alhurra develop from inspiration to reality with staff, stations, and a steadily growing audience.

The mission of this new Middle East television network is to broadcast accurate, timely, and relevant news and information about the region, the world, and the United States to a broad Arab-speaking audience. By doing this, we seek to foster freedom and democracy in the Middle East.

That is a tall order. I am proud to tell you that we are beginning to fill it. All of us who work in these operations can feel it, and the data we have gathered—and Governor Pattiz just mentioned a little bit about it—although early, appear to back that up.

It will take time, but I am confident we will succeed.

Until Sawa and Alhurra began broadcasting, people in the Arabic-speaking world got a steady diet of variations of just one story: Arab humiliation. The actual events are different from story to story and day to day. But they all carry this one message. It tells them that the Americans and the Israelis are the source of all the trouble in their lives. They bear no responsibility themselves.

News outlets in the Middle East, especially television news outlets, see themselves as mirrors of public opinion and their audience's emotions. So they come at their reporting with a point of view already in place, and as a result, they broadcast material that inflames viewers against America.

In the past few years, the Middle East has been a two-channel television market when it comes to news and information. The ratings for these two channels have been largely determined by one person and not by good journalism, and that person is Osama bin Laden. He knows neither channel wants to be frozen out and he plays that for all it is worth, rewarding one or the other with an exclusive tape of his latest threats. It is not about going out to find a scoop and go after a story. You wait in your newsroom praying for a tape to show up from al-Zarqawi or Osama bin Laden and then all American networks and Western networks will carry the message.

Well, it is not a two-channel market anymore, and the new player does not need to please bin Laden. Since February 14, Alhurra has brought a new idea to journalism in the Middle East—telling the truth. We do our work the way it is supposed to be done. We play it straight and we behave like news professionals because that is what we are.

As Mr. Pattiz mentioned, we were businesslike in our approach. We are heavily researched and we studied our market from Morocco to the Persian Gulf. We used what we learned to shape our product. What came out was the region's first news and information channel dedicated to telling the story completely and accurately. That means going beyond just reporting what happened. We provide background and context to explain why something happened and what the ramifications might be.

An example of this happened a couple of weeks ago in our coverage of the assassination of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantissi. Alhurra was ending one of its hour-long newscasts when the story broke. We immediately reported it on the newscast. Then we followed up the initial report with 5 hours of live coverage, including reaction and analysis from around the world and a look at what this would mean for the future of Hamas, the Palestinian people, and Israeli/Palestinian relations.

You cannot do that kind of work with amateurs. We have been able to recruit the best and the brightest, real pros from inside and outside the Middle East, from the United States as well. On the editorial side, most of the people are from the region and were hand-picked to be representative of the wide territory we serve.

Everyone we have hired shares our sense of journalistic values. In fact, during the first round of interviews that I have conducted myself, many of them asked me if Alhurra would be pure propaganda and if it could really be free, especially if it was funded by the government. My answer, of course, was it will be free. The fact that they were asking this question and they were concerned about this, they had just passed a major step for getting the job.

For some of my colleagues, joining the staff of Alhurra involved personal sacrifice, moving half a world away from family and friends to work for an organization that some people back home have been taught to believe is their enemy. I work with courageous people.

Alhurra has been on the air only 2½ months. In that time, the Middle East has endured some of the toughest news stories of the decade. Alhurra has been there to cover them. We were the first to report on a number of stories, and we have garnered exclusive interviews. We created a program schedule for Alhurra that is flexible enough that we can break into regularly scheduled programming to cover breaking news if it is warranted.

Also in that short period of time, we have been on the receiving end of a lot of unfocused criticism from our competitors and their keepers. That tells us that we have their attention. It is very important to mention here that most of the vicious articles that were directed at Alhurra came before we launched Alhurra and they came from media outlets funded by so-called friendly Arab governments. I think Alhurra and Radio Sawa were the first attempt by the United States to reach out directly to the Arab audience.

Television is a real “me too” industry. If a program succeeds on one network, you are likely to see copies start popping up on the other ones. This is true everywhere.

We are working to establish the gold standard that the other guys will want to rip off: the best technology, the finest professionals, the most innovative programming, the most eye-catching sets that you saw on the video, and the most compelling visuals. Our brand is freedom and democracy. We want them to follow us there.

Thank you again for allowing me to appear before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harb follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MOUAFAC HARB

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News outlets in the Middle East, especially television news outlets, see themselves as mirrors of public opinion and their audience’s emotions. So they come at their reporting with a point of view already in place, and as a result they broadcast material that inflames viewers against America.

In the past few years, the Middle East has been a two-channel television market when it comes to news and information. The ratings for these two channels have been largely determined by one person and not by good journalism: Osama bin Laden. He knows neither channel wants to be frozen out, and he plays that for all it’s worth, rewarding one or the other with an “exclusive” tape of his latest threats.

Well, it’s not a two-channel market anymore, and the new player doesn’t need to please bin Laden. Since February 14, Alhurra has brought a new idea to journalism in the Middle East—telling the truth. We do our work the way it’s supposed to be done. We play it straight, and we behave like news professionals because that’s what we are.

As Mr. Pattiz mentioned, we were business-like in our approach, and we studied our market from the Strait of Gibraltar to the Persian Gulf. We used what we learned to shape our product. What came out was the region’s first news and information channel dedicated to telling the story completely and accurately. That means going beyond just reporting what happened. We provide background and context to explain why something happened and what the ramifications might be.

An example of this happened a couple of weeks ago in our coverage of the assassination of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantissi. Alhurra was ending one of its hour-long newscasts when the story broke. We immediately reported it on the newscast. Then we followed up the initial report with five hours of live coverage, including reaction and analysis from around the world, and a look at what this would mean for the future of Hamas and Israeli/Palestinian relations.

You can’t do that kind of work with amateurs. We’ve been able to recruit the best and the brightest—real pros from inside and outside the Middle East. On the editorial side, most of the people are from the region and were hand-picked to be representative of the wide territory we serve.

Everyone we've hired shares our sense of journalistic values. In fact, during the first round of interviews, many of them asked me if Alhurra could really be free if it was funded by the government. My answer, of course, was yes. And if they were astute enough to be concerned about this, they had just passed a major test for getting the job.

For some of my colleagues, joining the staff of Alhurra involved personal sacrifice—moving half a world away from family and friends to work for an organization that some people back home have been taught to believe is their enemy. I work with courageous people.

Alhurra has been on the air only two and a half months. In that time, the Middle East has endured some of the toughest news stories of the decade. Alhurra has been there to cover them. We were the first to report on a number of stories and we've garnered exclusive interviews. We created a program schedule for Alhurra that is flexible enough that we can break into regularly scheduled programming to cover breaking news if it is warranted.

Also in that short period of time, we've been on the receiving end of a lot of unfocused criticism from our competitors and their keepers. That tells us that we have their attention.

Good. We want that.

Television is a real "me too" industry. If a program succeeds on one network, you're likely to see copies start popping up on the other ones. This is true everywhere.

We're working to establish the gold standard that the "other guys" will want to rip off—the best technology, the finest professionals, the most innovative programming, the most eye-catching sets, the most compelling visuals. Our brand is freedom and democracy. We want them to follow us there.

As I said earlier, this will take time, but we will succeed.

Thank you again for allowing me to appear before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you, Mr. Harb.

Let me begin the questioning with Mr. Tomlinson. Even here in the United States we have disagreement and discussion domestically about our policies overseas, whether it is the peace process or the current situation in Iraq or any other issue that affects the Middle East. Does that make it more difficult for the Board of Governors to carry out their mission in the region, the fact that we have policy disagreements here at home?

Mr. TOMLINSON. I do not think so, Mr. Chairman. Twenty-some years ago, I came to town as the Director of the Voice of America in the early days of the Reagan administration at the height of the cold war. My first observation about what we were doing was people were trying to get the Voice of America to speak with one voice. And I said you cannot understand American democracy, you cannot understand what this country is all about if you try to speak with one voice, because we have to reflect the voices of America across the political spectrum. We can do so in such a way as to emphasize majority opinion. We do not have to be a slave to making sure we put forward divisions in American society.

But we have a very strong administration. We have very strong feelings about some of the things the administration is doing. I think by enabling people to see how we operate that they will see how democracy could operate in their own countries.

I often go back to the fact that in the early 1970s or mid-1970s, Radio Free Europe and Voice of America made the decision to broadcast the Watergate hearings live. There was a lot of consternation about that because people were saying why are we exposing to the Communist world divisions in American society. The fact of the matter is, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I had so many people in Eastern Europe, so many from the former Soviet

Union say to me, you know, broadcasting those hearings was absolutely essential to demonstrating to us what democracy is really all about because, after all, democracy is about the rule of law. Democracy is about the separation of powers. Democracy is about concepts that you can only understand sometimes when you see it in action. That is why, as I was saying earlier, I am so happy we are launching Alhurra in the year of a Presidential election.

Senator SUNUNU. Is there a danger that the BBG's Government-supported broadcasting will ultimately make it more difficult for private, independent stations to develop in the Middle East?

Mr. TOMLINSON. I do not think so because I think we establish a model. We are very proud of the competence of our news operation. I was so proud seeing that film because it reflected what I have seen out there in northern Virginia. I am so proud of this colleague here and the many people who serve with him.

We set a standard and I think the standard is going to come to be seen as what broadcast journalism should be, as opposed to false reporting and sensationalism for the sake of stirring people up. What we do is real journalism. In putting forth this standard, I hope that when local entities begin broadcasting, that they will go with our standard as opposed to the Al Jazeera standard.

Mr. PATTIZ. Can I get a piece of that?

Mr. TOMLINSON. Why certainly.

Senator SUNUNU. Mr. Pattiz, please.

Mr. PATTIZ. Thank you.

Mr. TOMLINSON. Just so long as you agree with me.

Mr. PATTIZ. I never disagree with you, Mr. Chairman, never publicly anyway.

I cannot see any instance where the success of projects like Radio Sawa or Alhurra or any of the other projects that we do around the world would have any kind of a chilling effect on local media. The fact of the matter is it should have quite the opposite effect. As a businessman, when I go out and put a radio program or a format or a new station or what have you out on a market, I take a look at that market and I see what is working and I see how many people are watching it. I see what chunk of those people I can wind up getting. I think it creates a more vibrant and exciting marketplace that creates more opportunities.

We already have, in the case of Sawa, lots of imitators that have sprung up because of the success of Radio Sawa.

Senator SUNUNU. If I could ask both you and Mr. Harb to speak to that point, provide a couple of specific examples of the changes that you have seen in other broadcasters as a result of the product that is being produced by either Radio Sawa or Alhurra.

Mr. PATTIZ. Is that to me?

Senator SUNUNU. Yes. I assume each of you may know of one or two examples.

Mr. PATTIZ. Oh, sure. I can talk about Jordan and Egypt, as it relates to Radio Sawa. It has only been a matter of weeks with Alhurra. Even though we have seen some adjustments. Maybe you would like to talk about Alhurra, Mouafac, and I will talk about Sawa.

We have already seen in many places where Sawa broadcasts music-driven radio stations that are basically following our play

lists to attract audience. We originally started talking to the Egyptians about trying to get transmission within Egypt, which we have not secured. When I went to Qatar and met with Sheikh Hamad bin Jaber Al Thani who runs Al Jazeera radio and television in the Government of Qatar and asked him for an FM frequency, his response was “what took you so long” and they gave it to us. But in Egypt, we have been asking very aggressively for the last 3 years, and we still cannot get transmission within Egypt. We cover Egypt, but we cover Egypt from Cyprus.

But in Egypt, they have now put FM radio stations on the air with formats very similar to Sawa. So we are seeing this happening all over the place.

[The following letter containing additional information for the record was subsequently forwarded by Mr. Tomlinson.]

BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS,
330 INDEPENDENCE AVE., S.W.,
Washington, DC, June 3, 2004.

The Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, *Chairman,*
Subcommittee on International Operations and Terrorism,
Committee on Foreign Relations,
United States Senate,
Washington, DC 20510.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN:

Thank you for your interest in the establishment of a viable frequency for Radio Sawa audiences in Egypt. We heartily agree that reaching Egyptian audiences is a high priority for U.S. international broadcasting, given the largely anti-American tone of Egyptian media.

As you know, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) has been working with the Government of Egypt for nearly three years to find an agreeable in-country broadcast presence that would allow Radio Sawa to be heard clearly and regularly in Cairo and other major cities. As the Egyptian Ambassador’s letter to you attests, it has been difficult to find a solution that satisfies the legal and technical demands of both parties. However, in recent weeks, representatives of our two governments have had a number of productive exchanges which, we believe, can lead to the establishment of a quality radio signal into Cairo.

In previous discussions regarding transmission sites for Radio Sawa, the Egyptian Government has pointed us toward Egypt’s “Media City” outside of Cairo, where it houses a number of government and commercial broadcast entities. The BBG’s earlier proposal to establish an AM transmitter at this site met with technical problems, potentially interfering with other, already established, broadcast entities at the site. We have scaled-back our proposal to provide for the installation of an FM transmitter in Media City that would not pose similar interference problems. The location of an FM transmitter 32 miles outside of the city of Cairo is perhaps not our preferred option. However, we believe this proposal resolves the objectives of all parties in the current environment, and we are hopeful that this proposal will fit more satisfactorily within the parameters the Egyptian Government has set.

Radio Sawa is an important link in our effort to reach out to young people in the Arab world. We believe that its music programming, together with its accurate, objective news, will help to renew our relationship of trust and dialogue in the region. We are hopeful that we can reach an agreement that allows us to reach out more effectively in Cairo.

We greatly appreciate your interest in this important project. We will be happy to keep you informed as we make progress on our transmission capabilities in Egypt.

Sincerely,

KENNETH Y. TOMLINSON, *Chairman.*

Senator SUNUNU. Mr. Harb.

Mr. HARB. Yes. Since Governor Pattiz mentioned and talked about Sawa and our affect on the radio industry in the Middle East, I will focus more on the television industry.

I would like to start by saying Arab independent media is a myth. There is not today an independent Arab media. They are all funded by governments or ruling families or, in some cases, intelligence agencies in the Middle East. So there is not an independent media that we are preventing. However, we are trying to affect indigenous media by trying to raise their professional standards.

It is still a bit early to see that effect, but I have noticed a few things in the production values. More channels right now, including Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya and other television channels are imitating the way we present the news. I am not trying to simplify the question, but even Al Jazeera anchors smile now at the end of the newscast. One of the important things as a news director I would love to see—and I am starting to witness some of it—is to set the agenda of those media outlets in the morning, even if they do not imitate or carry what we say. Based on the editorial decisions that we make in the morning, we could influence some director of news on another channel on what stories to carry that day. And you see more American stories coming from the U.S. because they are trying to compete with us.

Senator SUNUNU. A final question before we go to Senator Nelson.

Mr. Pattiz, you mentioned Egypt not cooperating in helping to provide broadcast channels for, I think, Radio Sawa in particular. What other countries have shown that kind of resistance to being supportive of these kinds of open media outlets?

Mr. PATTIZ. Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Lebanon.

Senator SUNUNU. And what countries have been most accepting?

Mr. PATTIZ. Well, almost every place else in the region. We have FM stations throughout the region, all throughout North Africa. We just launched a few months ago—I think it was 5 or 6 months ago—in Morocco. We are getting stunning results, and we are up to about 8 FM stations there now.

In Amman, Jordan, a place where you would not think that a station like Radio Sawa would be accepted quite that easily—it is 60 percent Palestinian by birth or by heritage—we are an instantaneous hit. Sawa has maintained its popularity, though its news credibility has gone down a bit—which you would expect from there because of some of the things that have gone on in the region.

I think we are doing a really good job in Iraq now that we have FM frequencies rather than just broadcasting on AM frequencies from outside the area.

The Persian Gulf countries have been very, very cooperative. I think we have nearly two dozen FM stations on the air right now with the permission of the host governments.

Mr. TOMLINSON. Mr. Chairman, may I make one parallel point? Senator SUNUNU. Yes.

Mr. TOMLINSON. The important thing about satellite broadcasting is that satellite television is going to be to our future what short wave was in the past because satellite television goes over local censors of FM frequencies and enables us to go directly to the people. In the same sense, we are looking at many regions in the world

where we want to expand satellite broadcasting, and we have had great success in recent months and recent years in terms of support from the administration and from Congress. There is a great line from The Right Stuff, "no bucks, no Buck Rogers." In the 10 years following the end of the cold war, our budgets for international broadcasting were cut a very real 40 percent, and we have reversed that. I think it is important to get this satellite broadcasting going in this region and others, and we thank you for your attention because I think with your attention will come greater support for all we do.

Senator SUNUNU. Senator Nelson.

Senator NELSON. Mr. Chairman, I have a number of things that I want to cover here, but first of all, I want to tell you a story.

When I was a kid 17 years old, I was selected to represent America to be taken with a group of adults to speak over Radio Free Europe to the kids behind the Iron Curtain. For a 17-year-old kid, that was quite an experience. Radio Free Europe was broadcasting out of Munich at the time and then after the broadcast, which in itself was a tremendous experience for a 17-year-old, they then took me to the German-Czechoslovakian border at a little village called Tillyschanz where I saw for the first time the attempts to enslave by seeing the strands of barbed wire and the machine gun nest and the watchtower, the guard tower, and the dogs and the perfectly raked soil and the dragon's teeth, which are the concrete pyramids to keep a vehicle from crashing the fence and so forth.

I became, at that early age and that experience and then ultimately years later seeing the fall of the Berlin Wall, absolutely convinced it was the right position that our government was taking at that time. Radio Free Europe was considered separate so that it was not an arm of the U.S. Government.

So you know I am on your side on this.

Now, I want to ask you a little more delicate question. With the success that you are having with the new television station and the radio station, which I hope is true and I hope it is going to get better and better, other than Castro's jamming, why have we not had the success with Radio and TV Marti? I was an original sponsor of that back in the 1980s when I was in the House. Can you contrast the two?

Mr. TOMLINSON. I think, Senator Nelson, we cannot underplay the impact of that jamming. That jamming has been as intense in Cuba as any place on the face of this Earth in the history of international broadcasting.

But we have responded to that situation by, in the first place, trying to get into Cuba cassettes of Television Marti. We have tried to add satellite broadcasting so that if people can develop receivers, they can get it without regard to the jamming. We are seeking additional ways to get into Cuba. It is very difficult because, as you well know, we cannot interfere. We do not want to do anything to interfere with U.S. broadcasting. So it means we have to find a means of getting extra broadcasting into Cuba that does not send signals into the United States.

Having said that, we also have been engaged in a great deal of program reform of Marti in recent months. We got a new director of Marti, Pedro Roig. He set about increasing the relevance of pro-

gramming. He set about making the program, by the way, more news oriented because people are after information.

We are focused now on upgrading Marti because we think that Marti can give the same results that we have seen elsewhere if our broadcasting is as professional as it was in Eastern Europe. I was on the broadcasting board that ran Radio Free Europe for better than 8 years, and I came to respect, as Senator Biden did, that there was a mission orientation and there was a scholarship level that was brought to that operation. That was professional, professional, professional. That is what we have tried to do in recent months at Marti, and that is what we are going to demand of Marti.

So we cannot stop the jamming. But we can reform programming, make sure the programming is relevant to the people of Cuba, and making sure it is relevant to information-deprived people. So often those information-deprived people in Cuba are not interested in what is going on in south Florida. They are interested in what is going on on their own island or what is going on in terms of Cuba and its relations with other countries.

Senator NELSON. Is there any reason to believe that now that you are broadcasting on TV Marti off of a satellite geostationary over the eastern Atlantic, that you are getting more into Cuba despite the jamming now that you are going off the satellite?

Mr. TOMLINSON. Now that we are on satellite?

Senator NELSON. Yes.

Mr. TOMLINSON. No hard evidence yet, but I believe we are going to see that evidence in the coming months as we find ways to get receivers into Cuba because the great thing about the satellite signals is they cannot be jammed if you have a receiver. Now, granted, as soon as we went up with that satellite, there was a big crackdown on little dishes throughout Cuba. This will remain a problem because the local community operations will be looking for those dishes. The dishes of today are very small and, if we can get receivers in, we will be able to get the truth in.

Senator NELSON. All right. Back to the Middle East and Central Asia. Has your television station considered broadcasting last week's Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings—there were a series on Iraq—and broadcasting them with Arabic subtitles? I would commend it for your consideration because between Chairman Lugar and Senator Biden, they had—and you talked about scholarship—they had a series of witnesses that came forth that were respected scholars and presented a good demonstration of a democracy discussing different ideas. I think it would offer Iraqis a better understanding of the United States and our motives if they were seeing it through the eyes of a hearing instead of just the diet of what they are getting on Arab television. I wish you would. That is something to commend. You do not need to answer.

Mr. HARB. We did.

Senator NELSON. You already have?

Mr. HARB. We covered last week the confirmation hearing for Ambassador Negroponte and we also covered the Armed Forces hearings where Secretary Wolfowitz was speaking and he was asked questions. So we do cover those hearings, live with simultaneous translation in Arabic.

Senator NELSON. Did you cover these hearings that I am talking about?

Mr. HARB. The Armed Forces one we did.

Senator NELSON. Foreign Relations.

Mr. TOMLINSON. We will check, but you are exactly right.

Mr. HARB. But we do cover those hearings.

Senator NELSON. I think the substance was in those hearings that Chairman Lugar held, and was different than the substance that was in the Negroponte hearing.

Mr. TOMLINSON. We catch you.

Senator NELSON. OK.

Now, I would conclude with this. We have been told both publicly and privately of what Al Jazeera is doing with the truth. Obviously, what you all are doing is one way to try to counter that. Do you have any reason to believe that Al Jazeera is going to become more balanced in its approach as contrasted with what we are being told Al Jazeera is just totally biased?

Mr. TOMLINSON. It is almost worse than that, Senator. They are willing to go with false information, willing to distort for the purposes of stirring up the people in that region.

Senator NELSON. So what can we do?

Mr. PATTIZ. Well, I think we do what we are doing. I think we provide a different perspective that has not existed in the region. Obviously, the very quick preliminary numbers that we have shown you indicate that we are attracting an audience, and I think we work to continue to build that audience and to put on information that is different.

This is a big problem. I have had this conversation with Senator Biden. We are 8 to 9 years late.

When the satellite revolution started taking place in the Middle East, you had a confluence of two major events: first of all, the availability of satellite technology which would make it available to anybody who had a satellite dish without the necessity of the host government giving you permission. Second, is the population boom that is taking place where you have large numbers of people under the age of 20 who have absolutely no historical memory of anything that took place because they are certainly not getting it from their media.

So we have an opportunity to provide the kind of information that is not readily being supplied in the region, and we have to do that. Obviously, we are going to be doing it. Potentially between Radio Sawa and Alhurra, I think there is just no doubt that we are going to be available to tens of millions, and that is a tremendous opportunity for us.

Just to illustrate what it is you were talking about, I was at Alhurra a couple of weeks ago. Mouafac and I were standing by the monitors. We, like every other television network in the world, are monitoring what everybody else is doing. So we have got all the Arab TV satellite stations up on monitors. I watched a promo for Al Jazeera news, and here is what that promo looked like. It showed the Sheikh Yassin funeral. It showed a Hamas demonstration having to do with the Sheikh Yassin funeral. It showed American flags and Israeli flags being stomped on and burned. It immediately cut to a scene of several Hasidic Jews praying at the West-

ern Wall, and then it immediately cut to a scene of Israeli soldiers in conflict with Palestinian youth. And that is the promo that they were using for their news, which they had run over and over again probably for several days.

So what we are doing is providing Alhurra. We are the free one. The way we position our station is very different from the way they position their stations. This is not going to be easy. It is not going to be quick, but it is absolutely necessary. I cannot think of a more cost efficient way to reach the region, and to reach the number of people that we can reach in the region, and have the kind of effect that we are showing with Radio Sawa where, by a margin of 2 to 1, Sawa listeners say they have a more positive view of the United States of America than do non-Sawa listeners.

Mr. TOMLINSON. Senator Nelson, if I could add one more thing. I think American democracy is based on the premise that the people are not stupid. I think that applies in societies other than the United States. When we came out with Sawa, people said, oh, the people of the Arab world will never accept news from Sawa. They boycott American products. Why would they pay any attention to the news on an American-sponsored radio station? And maybe in those early weeks, they did not. Norm talked about the initial impact in Jordan. When only 1 percent of the people said they took Sawa news as credible, even though they were listening to the station in huge numbers.

But then as they came to understand that the news was accurate and they could turn on Sawa to find out what was really happening in the world and they could get what was really happening in the world quickly—if you do not have censorship, if you do not have spin, you can get that news out quicker—and then the figures started to grow.

Now in the latest survey, you will see that 70 percent of the people who listen to us in Jordan say that our news is credible and believable. I believe this is another manifestation of the fact that, whether it is here or in the Arab world, in the long run the people are not stupid. And if you give them the truth, give them accurate news, in the end we will have an impact.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

Senator Biden, welcome.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Maybe you all should broadcast in the United States. Seventy percent of the people think the news is credible. I do not want to offend my news folks back here, but I do not think there is any newspaper in America—at any rate, having said that—you would be violating Federal law, if you did, obviously. You are not allowed to do that.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for holding this hearing. I apologize for coming late.

As all three of the witnesses know, particularly the chairman and Norm, this is sort of a hobby horse of mine, and I want to start off by complimenting you. You guys are doing a great job. You have gone out and hired a serious person. I am serious. A big deal.

The thing I hope and I know that my friend, Senator Nelson, understood, Ken, from what you said about Radio Marti and, for example, the comparison to Radio Free Europe. There were 4 decades

of institutional memory, genuine scholarship. As a matter fact, the library at Radio Free Europe was the place where Ph.D. candidates from Harvard and Yale and Stanford and Penn and Georgetown and Delaware went to write their theses to get information because it was hard.

We had a hard fight here relative to the Board of International Broadcasters when a lot of people thought, when the wall came down, that we only needed the Voice of America, which is very positive. But there was this gigantic fight. It is the only time in my entire career I ever threatened to filibuster if, in fact, it did not allow for journalistic independence and to keep Radio Free Europe and extend it to Radio Free Asia and so on.

Now, you guys are a logical extension of all that, but with almost an illogical conclusion. Norm, even I was skeptical when I sought you out to be on the board. What made me realize it was riding literally on a flight to Los Angeles hearing Westwood One again and the interviews with the rock stars. I am not joking. I really mean it. That package you came up with and sold is essentially a less sophisticated version of what you are doing now. As you said to me, why is the nation which basically invented radio and how to use it and to market it, why the heck were we behind the 8-ball? You have exceeded, I must tell you, my expectations in terms of the rapidity with which all of you have done this.

But I suggest to the chairman—and I know how busy we all are, but if you get a chance, Mr. Chairman, to go out to Alhurra to the studio in Springfield, Virginia, and spend, as I did and others have—I guess I was only there a couple hours. It is breathtaking. It is breathtaking. First of all, because of your leadership and the leadership of this committee and the Senate and the House, we were able to give them enough money, though most people did not think it was enough—and not enough time. But it amazed me how quickly you got that studio up and running. Guys like me spend a fair amount of time in studios doing interviews around this town and around this country. I have not seen anything like it. NBC, CBS, CNN. I guess, in part, it is because everything is brand new, but the way you set it up, it is absolutely the state-of-the-art, No. 1.

No. 2, what everybody should know is you went out and hired serious people like your colleague from other endeavors. Is there anybody from Al Jazeera you hired?

Mr. HARB. Yes.

Senator BIDEN. How many people do you have roughly?

Mr. HARB. Four or five.

Senator BIDEN. How about any other Arab television network?

Mr. HARB. We have managed to recruit from most leading satellite channels.

Senator BIDEN. And you see their anchors. I mean it. They have every vestige of what has caused American television stations to succeed. They are very attractive anchors, men and women. You guys did it as if you were setting up a new CBS, if it was CBK or something, a new network here. It is amazing.

But the most important thing I think is you did what was the key to success in the independent radio stations in the 1950s. You hired indigenous people. Did you all go into this in your testimony

about not only indigenous people, you hired here at the “network headquarters”? My phrase. I know it is not a network headquarters but at headquarters. Tell me about what is in the field. Do you have reporters in the field?

Mr. HARB. Yes, we do.

Senator BIDEN. By field I mean, Baghdad, Damascus, wherever.

Mr. HARB. Yes, sir, we do have reports based from northern Iraq to even someone on the outskirts of Fallujah right now reporting for us. We have people from Najaf, Iraqi reporters. We have people in—

Senator BIDEN. And they have cameras?

Mr. HARB. They have cameras. They report via camera, via satellite link, or sometimes if it is breaking news, they call us over the phone all from the Middle East.

Mr. PATTIZ. When you put the news staff of Radio Sawa and the news staff of Alhurra together, we have one of the largest, if not the largest, Arabic language news gathering organizations in the world.

Senator BIDEN. Tell me when my time is up, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SUNUNU. Oh, you are not even close.

Senator BIDEN. Let us talk about radio for a second. Surveys in Morocco said 88 percent of the people in Casablanca and Rabat listen to Radio Sawa. Is there any American radio station with any numbers like that? And do not tell me Westwood One.

Mr. PATTIZ. Maybe if you included every single Westwood One program that we have on NBC, CBS, and CNN, all of which are our networks. But no.

Senator BIDEN. All kidding aside.

Mr. PATTIZ. No, it is not possible.

Senator BIDEN. It is not, is it?

Mr. PATTIZ. No, it really is not.

Senator BIDEN. Why is it not possible? It is important, I think, for people to understand and for me to understand why it is possible there and not here. When I say this, Norm, people look at me and they do not believe. They know American radio. I say it to American broadcasters, American news people, and I say 88 percent, and they say, now, wait a minute. That is not possible. There is not a single TV or radio station that has 88 percent and few have even 88 percent in their own little market. But why?

Mr. PATTIZ. Well, first of all, there are 10,000 commercial radio stations here in the United States. I mean when I went over there, I could feel it. I could just smell it. There was a hole big enough to drive a fleet of Mack trucks through. The nature of radio over there is different than the case with television. They have a very vibrant television market over there, but in radio it is a vast wasteland. It is government-controlled. It is mostly news and information. It is boring. It is government radio.

Senator BIDEN. That is the point I want you to make. That is an important point for the credibility of what we are doing and why this was a good idea.

The second question about radio. Is there an ability to expand the market? Is there another Sawa in the making or is Sawa sufficient? In other words, does it make sense for us to think about multiplying the radio piece or is that sufficient like Radio Free Eu-

rope was sufficient with Radio Liberty. Do you understand what I am trying to say?

Mr. PATTIZ. Yes, absolutely, Senator. My personal opinion?

Senator BIDEN. Yes.

Mr. PATTIZ. I think now with the launch of Alhurra television, that what we have is a vehicle that is youth oriented, that reaches very effectively on radio an audience that is 30 and under and does it very effectively. And now we have a television outlet that is mass appeal that does not have a particular target audience by formats because television is not a medium of formats. It is a medium of programs. So in television we can target particular audiences based upon the individual programs that we put on the air. I think, considering the resources that we have and the needs that we have, that those services in the Middle East will get the job done.

As we become more successful and create more imitators and broaden the market and create competition and create more successful indigenous broadcasters and our audience share as a function of that goes down, that is when we will have to become more like the narrowcasters that exist in America today because there are no narrowcasters in America. Everybody is a narrowcaster and everybody talks about Fox News and CNN.

Senator BIDEN. Explain what you mean by narrowcaster because people listening will not know what that means.

Mr. PATTIZ. The use of the word "broad," refers to reaching a huge percentage of people. It was not unusual for a television network to have a 30 share. Well, it is very unusual for a television network to have a 30 share today. When you talk about the raw numbers for somebody like a Fox or an CNN or an MSNBC, in prime time Fox reaches an average audience of about 2.5 million people. CNN reaches an average audience of about 1.5 million people.

Senator BIDEN. Out of a total of 300 million people.

Mr. PATTIZ. Yes, the population of the United States.

So can you have impact without having to reach those kinds of numbers? Yes, you can. But when we become more successful and create bigger and more robust markets, then we may have to look at, in order to maintain our effectiveness, putting on different formats.

When I started in the radio business, there were a half a dozen formats. That was 30 years ago. I think I had just had a conversation with Marconi at the time. But there were five or six different formats. There was classical music and there was news radio and there were talk radio stations. There was country music. There was rock and roll music. Well, today there are probably 12 different incarnations of rock and roll or contemporary music. So everything continues to get narrower and narrower and narrower.

And as a function of it getting narrower, Senator, rather than try to form public opinion, we tend more to find out what that opinion is and pander to it. That is what is going on in the Middle East.

Senator BIDEN. Two quick questions. I would have assumed that as a consequence of the success of either Sawa or the television station, if the result was that we generated a lot of imitators, I would have thought that that in and of itself would be a measure of success. In other words, I am assuming that to the extent that you

generate imitators, it must mean there is something that the guard has been let down a little bit in these countries in terms of censorship. I may be wrong about this. I really do not know the answer. Is that likely to be the way things develop, or is it likely that there will be a development that there are more Al Jazeeraas with narrower focus that are virtually or vehemently anti-American?

Mr. HARB. Yes, I agree with you, Senator, that it is one of the ways to measure success when people start imitating what we do. As I said in my presentation before, television is a “me too” medium, whereby if you have a success story, other channels will start to imitate you. If we do what we intend to do, to be a source of accurate information, lively debate, and people start to realize that this is something that is missing from other channels, the other channels will begin to compete with us.

Senator BIDEN. I am hoping that because I watched, when I was out at Alhurra, a debate with four leading Arab voices. One was I think the guy who does the program. It was not onsite. The guy who does the program was an Egyptian and then there were three other people from the region arguing current affairs. It was kind of like a multiple Meet the Press but it was all with major people that other people knew and discussing issues. I thought to myself that must be pretty unique in the region.

There was one show you showed me that there is a well-known—I think he was Egyptian—commentator who ran a show that was really quite provocative, as it was translated to me, about things like whether or not democracy in Egypt was preferable.

Mr. HARB. The concept of debate shows has reached the Arab world today, but the parameters and the topics allowed to be discussed on these debate shows is what we are trying to expand. Right now the freedom of speech is defined in the Arab media by attacking the United States and Israel. Outside these two parameters people are not venturing yet to talk about unemployment and education in the Middle East. These are some of the issues that we at Alhurra try to expand and make sure our audiences are not only aware of what is going on in the region, but we want them to be part of the global debate.

Senator BIDEN. Last question. The numbers with Sawa, as well as the numbers at Alhurra, are different from country to country. For example, I gave you the 88 percent figure for Sawa in Morocco, but that figure is 11 percent in Egypt and that figure is 42 percent in Kuwait. I assume if we had time—and we do not—to go through the numbers of the listenership and the early judgments about Alhurra, you would see that kind of fluctuation among countries. Or would you? Because they have a satellite, you do not have that fluctuation?

Mr. PATTIZ. You are absolutely right on that, Senator. Because the satellite covers all 22 countries of the region, it is really dependent upon the distribution of satellite dishes and their availability to pull down that signal. In the case of Radio Sawa, for instance, the reason why the number in Egypt is much lower than the number in other places is because we have no distribution inside Egypt. We are broadcasting to Egypt from Cyprus on an AM frequency, where in the other places we are predominantly on the

FM band, and that is because of the inability to get the Egyptians to give us distribution within the country.

Senator BIDEN. Well, Mr. Chairman, I am glad that you have taken on this hearing. Quite frankly, I think this public diplomacy—I really mean this—is the sort of uncharted, untested element of our foreign policy that has the potential for the greatest bang for the buck. It is like that phrase attributed to G.K. Chesterton. He said it is not that, “The Christian idea has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and left untried.” Well, I think that is where we are here. It is not that we have tried this and it is found wanting. I think it has been found difficult and left untried.

I would like to come back and try to convince you, Mr. Chairman. I had put together with the help of the board, at the request of the President of the United States actually, a fairly comprehensive strategy for this that would cost us about a half a billion dollars over 5 years, \$250 million in infrastructure over 5 years and \$250 million in operating costs. I would really like to talk with you and others about it.

But I really do think it has been found difficult and left untried. You guys made a great start. Thank you and thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you, Senator Biden. I certainly look forward to taking a look at that proposal and to working with you on incorporating some of its ideas to the BBG in our public diplomacy effort.

I have just a couple questions before we move to our second panel. To followup on one of Senator Biden’s questions, Mr. Harb, where are you having the most difficulty in attracting viewers? Are there any countries where the viewership, the uptake rate just is not what you would expect, and why would that be?

Mr. HARB. You are referring to radio or television, Mr. Chairman?

Senator SUNUNU. Alhurra.

Mr. HARB. Because we are delivered via satellite, it is not about difficulty. It is just about the penetration of satellite television in a given country. In places like Sudan or probably Yemen and upper Egypt, people do not have satellite channels.

Senator SUNUNU. But for an area of a given penetration, are you suggesting that the viewership rates are similar? My question was, are there particular countries where perhaps the incumbent or indigenous station is so strong or so powerful that you are not attracting viewers or where there are cultural issues?

Mr. HARB. I see a trend that everywhere satellite is very common in a country, that we have similar numbers. We expected that in Lebanon we would not have good numbers because indigenous channels are very advanced, but it happens to be it is one of the top markets that we have right now.

I believe in Egypt there may be fewer viewers because people do not have a lot of satellite dishes and there is some sort of, I would call, cultural bias. So if you rate the audience in Egypt, most of them would say to you they watch the Egyptian channels. One of the areas that we need to do more research on is Egypt and North Africa.

Senator SUNUNU. Well, thank you. I want to wish you continued success. I look forward to revisiting some of the questions and issues that we touched on with our first panel. I hope you will be available for any followup information that we want to have you submit for the record.

At this time I will call the next panel up, but I do want to take a 5-minute recess before we begin promptly with the second panel at 4:05.

[Recess.]

Senator SUNUNU. The subcommittee will come to order with our second panel.

Welcome to each of you. I ask that as we move across the panel, we will provide testimony—we will just go across the panel from left to right—that you, as briefly as possible, summarize your written testimony so that we can leave as much time as possible for questions.

On our second panel is Jess Ford from the General Accounting Office; Dr. Shibley Telhami of the University of Maryland; the Honorable William Rugh of Georgetown University; and Dr. Edmund Ghareeb of American University here in Washington. We will begin with Mr. Rugh. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM A. RUGH, ASSOCIATE, INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF DIPLOMACY, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Ambassador RUGH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am honored to be invited to testify on this very important subject. I was a public diplomacy official with the U.S. Information Agency for 30 years and I have followed public diplomacy ever since. This is a vital issue, especially today in light of the tension between America and the Arab world.

I would like, Mr. Chairman, to report on some Arab reaction that I have heard to the broadcasts by Radio Sawa and Alhurra television, but first, if I may, I would like to put that in context by talking about the competitive marketplace that currently exists in Arab broadcasting. The context is this in my view briefly.

A revolution in Arab television has taken place over the past decade. Prior to 1991, nearly all Arab radio and television was owned and controlled by Arab governments in each country. The content of the broadcast was supportive of the government completely. It was unimaginative and boring. Media laws prohibited any criticism of the head of state, of religion, or of anything undermining public order, and self-censorship added to that.

But during the 1990s, several private Arab satellite channels were established based in Europe and they broadcast all over the Arab world. They brought a new approach to Arab television. Their news coverage was much broader, bringing live reports from Israel, Afghanistan, and elsewhere for the first time. They introduced lively discussion programs that broke taboos. Their talk shows brought together religious fundamentalists and extremists, discussed the role of women, criticized governments. For example, I watched Al Jazeera with a call-in show that featured a Saudi prince who was asked by a person on the other end of the phone line in Riyadh about Saudi corruption. That was on Al Jazeera. It was getting into

a political discussion by Al Jazeera which had never been done before by Arab television. Al Jazeera broke so many taboos that virtually every Arab government protested and took action against it.

But others followed. Hizbollah's Al Manar television was stridently anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian, but it was very popular.

Americans tend to regard Al Jazeera as anti-American, as you have heard in the previous panel, and to some extent that is true. But some of the anti-American content that we see as Americans in Al Jazeera is really following the street. It is a market-driven medium, as are most of the new satellite stations, and Al Jazeera is not the only one. And also we have to be aware that there is a cultural bias that is found in every country. For example, American television will give priority in its news broadcasts to Americans dying in Iraq while Arab television will give priority to Arabs dying in Iraq.

Today Arab audiences, Mr. Chairman, can choose from dozens of television channels. Typically viewers in any country only watch about six or seven of them regularly. And so Arab viewers today might typically watch Al Jazeera or Al Arabiya, for example, for all news. They might turn to Middle East Broadcasting and Orbit for entertainment, and I might emphasize that the entertainment includes a lot of American content. They buy Hollywood films. They buy American television serials and programs. They might watch Al Manar if they want to watch a strongly pro-Palestinian reporting. And they probably watch their own government television channel for local news. So the market in the Arab world for television is very tight and the choices are broad for every Arab television viewer.

Let me now turn briefly, Mr. Chairman, to Radio Sawa and Alhurra, and what I want to report to you is not a scientific, quantitative survey but reaction that I have heard from many Arabs that I have talked to who watch Alhurra regularly and who listen to Radio Sawa regularly. I am not going to quote any of the commentary from Arabs who are normally hostile to America. The comments that I will give you are all from Arabs who are basically friendly to America and want the United States to do well.

First of all, Radio Sawa. I have to emphasize in the beginning of this analysis that Radio Sawa and Alhurra are considered U.S. Government broadcasting stations. The so-called firewall that the Broadcasting Board of Governors talks about is not recognized and not appreciated. So that is the basis from which we operate.

Now, Radio Sawa's selection of news reinforces this impression that it is a U.S. Government station. I must say I was a skeptic at the beginning of its launch last year, but it seems to be popular with many young people, though young people who can hear it. They like its music. But the Arab adults that I have spoken with—and I have just recently returned from two trips to the Middle East—tell me that they prefer to listen to BBC Arabic and that they miss the Voice of America's Arabic program because it was better news, better coverage, and a broader program.

Another issue for Radio Sawa is audibility. The Voice of America had a problem with its signal. It had a problem of audibility because it was primarily on short wave and on medium wave from Rhodes, and Radio Sawa has done a bit better because it is more

audible in more places, but it is still not being heard in many parts of the Arab world.

In conclusion, Radio Sawa has had some impact, but its impact with important policymaker audiences, that is, adults, is very limited.

Alhurra television, however, has had a much more difficult time penetrating the Arab broadcast market because it is so highly saturated with Arab satellite television channels that Arab viewers find very interesting. Like Radio Sawa, it is considered a government broadcaster. First impressions are important and the inaugural interview with President Bush on Alhurra made it look from the start like any of the old-time, old-style Arab government-owned channels because that is what they do. Moreover, the choice of news and features seem to Arab viewers to be dictated by U.S. Government preferences. Viewers see a great deal of emphasis on Israel, on terrorism, rather than on the plight of the Palestinians and the Iraqi people. The promo that Mr. Pattiz mentioned in the previous panel focusing on other issues are exactly what the market wants, and this is what they are seeing from Alhurra. Therefore, it is not appealing.

Moreover, regular viewers have told me that the channel seems to lack a pan-Arab character because most of the presenters—and this is impressions again—seem to viewers to be Lebanese Christians. They would like to see more presenters from the gulf and elsewhere.

Arab viewers, Mr. Chairman, who are pro-American tell me they have been disappointed in the programming because they expected a lot more. They say it is not as effective in news gathering in the Middle East as they thought it would be. For example, Al Jazeera is reporting from inside Fallujah and Alhurra is not even though the United States is the occupying power in Iraq and they expected Alhurra to have an advantage. That may be unfair but that was the expectation.

They say Alhurra is disappointing because it is not aggressively reporting on Arab corruption and lack of democracy which they expected it to do because President Bush has focused publicly on these issues and he has named specific Arab countries and shortcomings in those countries in public statements. But Arab viewers of Alhurra say that when Alhurra, for example, interviewed the Tunisian Foreign Minister recently, the Alhurra reporter complied with the Tunisian demand that human rights violations in Tunisia not be raised. So they understand and the word is getting out that Alhurra is just like any other government broadcasting station in the Middle East. It stays away from internal Arab problems.

They also say they are disappointed that Alhurra—and this is surprising—has not done better than Al Jazeera and other Arab channels in reporting news about the United States. For example, in one case Al Jazeera reported on President Bush live while Alhurra did not. So with the friends of ours in the Arab world, Alhurra has been a disappointment, has not met their expectations.

Mr. Chairman, I will conclude by making some recommendations if I may.

I would say that Radio Sawa needs to improve its reach and its audibility, and it needs to focus more on what important adult au-

diences want to hear from a U.S. Government radio station. If we want to support American public diplomacy, we need to reach movers and shakers. We need to reach policymakers, not just youth. It would do well to broaden its offerings along the lines of the old VOA Arabic Service which had a good program, but unfortunately had signal problems.

As for Alhurra, quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, because the market is already full of channels that Arab audiences like, I do not expect that it will succeed in reaching important audiences. It is, of course, too early to be sure about that, but the beginning is not at all promising. Since money for public diplomacy is scarce, I would prefer to spend the money we spend on Alhurra in increasing our cadre of professionals who have Arabic language skills who can explain America and its policies on the existing Arab television channels, and this is possible. I have appeared many times on Al Jazeera myself in Arabic explaining America and its policies, and it is possible to continue to do that. We need to do much more of that.

Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that since the 9/11 terrorists used American planes to kill Americans, we should be able to use Arab media to inform and educate Arab audiences.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Rugh follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM A. RUGH

I would like to make some comments on Radio Sawa and al Hurra television as seen by Arab audiences. These comments are based on recent conversations and observations and a study of the history of Arab broadcasting. First I will describe the Arab broadcasting context into which Radio al Sawa and al Hurra television were introduced, and then I will cite some Arab reactions to both of them.

THE ARAB BROADCASTING CONTEXT

Almost all radio and television systems in the Arab world developed under the direct ownership and control of Arab governments. While there were some private Arab newspapers, radio and TV were government operations. Most Arab broadcasting laws prohibited criticism of the head of state, defamation of religion, or undermining public order. Additional taboos were observed by broadcast editors based on local custom and political circumstances. Arab broadcast audiences therefore had access only to news and commentary officially approved by their respective governments, unless they could tune in to the Voice of America, BBC, Radio Monte Carlo or CNN. The content of Arab radio and television broadcasts was generally pretty unimaginative and boring because there was no real competition in Arabic. This situation prevailed throughout the Arab world until the early 1990s.

Then a revolution in television broadcasting occurred, as private Arab satellite television channels were established in Europe that transmitted programs in Arabic to all Arab countries. Why did this happen? In 1991, when CNN provided 24/7 coverage of Desert Storm, Arabs saw the possibility of instantaneous live coverage of dramatic regional events, that satellite technology and cheaper satellite receiving dishes had made possible. But they regarded the CNN broadcasts as American in news selection and commentary, and Arab entrepreneurs began to think about the possibility of satellite television in Arabic and edited from an Arab point of view. Wealthy private investors from Saudi Arabia, and then others, started Arab satellite television stations whose programs were intended for a pan-Arab market.

The new satellite television channels broadcast news, public affairs programs and commentary, along with other content including entertainment, much of it Hollywood movies or programs purchased from American commercial television. But there were two aspects of these new channels that made their impact on Arab broadcasting revolutionary. One was that they began to cover important regional news events more professionally and more effectively, having correspondents on the scene reporting live, and even entering previously off-limits areas like Israel to get

the news. The second innovation was to present discussions of sensitive topics from different points of view that broke previous taboos.

The pioneer in these innovations was al Jazeera Television, based in Qatar. Al Jazeera was and is financed by the government of Qatar, but it is radically different from the traditional government-controlled television channels that dominated the Arab world until 1991. The government of Qatar allowed al Jazeera to cover news in Israel and Afghanistan that had never before been covered by Arab TV channels, and it allowed al Jazeera to broadcast talk shows in which views were expressed that had never before been heard on Arab television, because the channels had been so tightly controlled by their respective governments. Al Jazeera carried talk shows on which Islamic fundamentalists debated with secularists, feminists argued for more women's rights, and opposition political spokesmen criticized specific governments by name. These talk shows pleased audiences but they angered officials in other Arab countries, and at one time or another, virtually every Arab government has protested al Jazeera and taken action against it, including expelling its correspondents. Some taboos still existed but many were broken. The Government of Qatar seems to have taken pride in allowing al Jazeera to poke other Arab governments in the eye, perhaps to attract attention to this tiny country. Whatever the reason, other Arab satellite channels, even the ones developed by other governments such as Abu Dhabi, have to some extent imitated al Jazeera by improving their regional news coverage and making their public affairs programming more lively and interesting.

The news and public affairs programs on these channels seem to many Westerners to have a strong anti-American bias. Criticism of American policy is frequently expressed on talk shows in al Jazeera and other channels, and news reports are edited differently from news reports on American TV, often showing American actions in a negative light. Some of this is deliberately anti-American editing, especially for example on Hizbollah's al Manar channel. But much of what appears to Americans as anti-American is primarily motivated by the desire of editors at al Jazeera and other channels to satisfy the Arab market. There is today widespread criticism in the Arab world of American policy in the Middle East, and Arab television reflects that. Moreover, there is a cultural bias in Arab television, just as there is a cultural bias for example in American television, or British television. Thus when one American is killed in Iraq, that is priority news in U.S. television but not necessarily on Arab television. Conversely, when a Palestinian civilian is killed in the West Bank, that usually is priority news on Arab television but not necessarily here.

Today the Arab television viewer with a satellite dish has a choice of dozens of channels. But like most TV viewers around the world, the Arab television viewer tends to watch, at most, only six or seven of them in a given week. Typically an avid television viewer might watch al Jazeera, al Arabiya or Arab News Network for round-the clock coverage of news and public affairs; Middle East Broadcasting, Orbit, Arab Radio and Television or Lebanese Broadcasting Company International for entertainment including Western and Arab programs; the Hizbollah channel al Manar for aggressive pro-Palestinian commentary and news; plus the local TV channel for local news. There are many choices.

RADIO SAWA AND AL HURRA TELEVISION

This is the environment into which Radio Sawa and al Hurra television have been introduced. What has been the impact? I will report some Arab perceptions, since in the world of ideas, perceptions are often as important as reality. These comments are based on anecdotal information, not a formal survey.

Radio Sawa

Young audiences who are able to hear Radio Sawa seem to like its mix of Arabic and Western music, and it has achieved some popularity just as Radio Monte Carlo had decades earlier. But Arab adults I have spoken with told me that they much prefer BBC Arabic Radio, because BBC carries much more interesting and useful news about the region and the world, and they regard BBC as relatively objective. Some of the people who used to the Voice of America in Arabic now listen to BBC instead of Radio Sawa.

Secondly, audibility is important. The Voice of America Arabic Service, which has been replaced by Radio Sawa, was limited in its effectiveness because it was not audible on medium wave throughout the area. BBC and Radio Monte Carlo had stronger medium wave signals so they were more successful. Now Radio Sawa has some new transmitter access and this has helped it considerably. But in important countries where it is not audible, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Radio Sawa too is ineffective.

Third, and importantly, Radio Sawa is regarded as a U.S. Government sponsored station. Arab listeners are experienced in detecting who is behind a given broadcaster, and they sensed that the news and public affairs programs were sponsored by the American government. The “firewall” that the Broadcasting Board of Governors speaks of, separating Radio Sawa from State Department policy, was not seen or appreciated by Arab listeners. They simply accepted Radio Sawa as another government radio station.

Radio Sawa has some potential, but rather than focusing on entertainment that Arab audiences can get elsewhere, I believe it should focus on providing the kind of news and public affairs programs that Arab audiences, including adults, want. Audience surveys should not only measure audience share but compare Radio Sawa against other radio stations at moments in which there is an important news event, such as the finding of Saddam Hussain or a Presidential news conference. If Radio Sawa can increase its coverage of the listening area, and take advantage of the fact that it is regarded as a U.S. Government station by broadcasting more about American policies in the region and the American public’s views of those policies, it should have a greater impact.

Al Hurra Television

Al Hurra Television has had a much more difficult time penetrating the Arab market than Radio Sawa, because the radio market was not very competitive, while the Arab television market was highly saturated with channels that Arab audiences found interesting.

First, like Radio Sawa, al Hurra was assumed to be a U.S. Government broadcaster. The “firewall” was not recognized. This assumption was confirmed by Arab viewers in several ways. The content and style of the news gave the impression that it was not an Arab channel but American. Subjects that were chosen, and the time devoted to them in newscasts, seemed determined from an American point of view rather than an Arab perspective. More attention was paid to Americans in the news than to Arabs in the news. Language also did not match that of most Arab television stations; for example Palestinian suicide bombers were not referred to as “martyrs.” Most importantly, the first impression viewers got of al Hurra—and first impressions are important—was the inaugural interview with President Bush. Arab government-owned television stations have always given prominence to statements by their heads of state, and the Bush interview seemed to stamp al Hurra as just one more government-owned channel.

Secondly, and relatedly, a common Arab reaction that I have heard is disappointment that al Hurra is not effective as a newsgathering agency in the Middle East. Arab viewers seeking news about what is happening inside Falluja today turn to al Jazeera and al Arabiya, because al Hurra is not providing reporting as good as theirs. Arab viewers assumed that since the United States is the occupying power in Iraq, and al Hurra is the American government’s television channel, al Hurra should be in the best position of any broadcaster to have the best and quickest access to news events in Iraq, but it does not. Al Hurra’s potential advantage in this competitive market has been lost.

More generally, Arab viewers tell me they are surprised that al Hurra does not cover in more depth stories related to the Middle East that are important to Arab viewers. They say that often al Hurra gives a story on the Middle East short shrift and turns to a cooking show while the other Arab channels continue detailed coverage.

Third, another common reaction that I have heard from Arab viewers of al Hurra was disappointment that it has been weak in its coverage of the American domestic scene. Arab viewers have become accustomed to watching the U.S.-based correspondents of al Jazeera, al Arabiya, Abu Dhabi and other Arab television channels covering developments in the United States, often with live reports, in Arabic. Arab viewers who understand English also have access to ABC, CBS and NBC news and current events. They expected al Hurra to cover the U.S. domestic scene much better, more comprehensively and more professionally than anything they had seen before, but al Hurra seemed weak by comparison. For example, they turned to al Jazeera for a recent live broadcast by President Bush because al Hurra did not cover it live.

Fourth, another disappointment expressed by Arab viewers is that they expected al Hurra to be aggressively supporting democracy and human rights, but they say it has failed to live up to that expectation. The context is important here. Many Arab viewers have been critical of their own governments for failure to move in the direction of democratization, an end to corruption, or to protect the human rights of their citizens. The revolution that has taken place in Arab television broadcasting has opened up debate on many issues that were previously taboo, but there are still

some taboos relating to internal domestic politics that remain. For example, when Saad al Din Ibrahim went to jail in Egypt, Egyptian media did not rally to his defense. Other human rights activists in other Arab countries are in jail or being mistreated but the Arab media are not raising their cases. Since President Bush has been calling for democratization and an end to corruption in the Arab world and he has specifically mentioned Arab governments that should undertake reforms, Arab audiences hoped and expected that al Hurra would amplify this policy and focus on domestic reforms that are needed in Arab countries.

Some Arab viewers believe that al Hurra avoids taking up Arab domestic reform cases out of deference to Arab governments, and refuses to raise sensitive domestic issues. For example, when Tunisian President Ben Au was in Washington recently, it is widely believed that al Hurra accepted the Tunisian demand that in an interview with the Tunisian Foreign Minister, the question of Tunisia's human rights abuses not be included. Al Hurra therefore looks like any other government-owned channel that respects Arab taboos.

Finally, Arab regular viewers of al Hurra tell me that the tone and style of the broadcasts lack pan-Arab balance. They assume from the names and accents of the presenters that most of them are Lebanese Christians, and they wonder about the absence of broadcast professionals from the Gulf, for example. Arab viewers are always sensitive to identification of the individuals by nationality, tribe and religion, so this is an important factor in creating the al Hurra image.

In conclusion, Radio Sawa may have some potential if it improves its content, and tries some of the effective programming that VOA Arabic used over the years. However, as for al Hurra, it has entered a very competitive market and the first impression that it has made has disappointed many viewers. It was to be expected that those implacably hostile to America would criticize al Hurra no matter what it did, but it is telling that the specific comments mentioned here have come essentially from America's friends in the region who want us to succeed and be understood. My conclusion is that while it is still too early to be sure, early indications are that al Hurra cannot succeed in this very competitive market.

Something urgently needs to be done to help bridge the great gap between American and Arab perceptions. We are in a serious war of ideas. My recommendation is that it would be more cost-effective to devote the funds used for television broadcasting to other badly needed public diplomacy programs. The most effective public diplomacy for Arab audiences involves dialogue by Americans willing to listen and able to explain the United States and its policies. Instead of trying to manage our own television channel, we should do more to gain access to the existing Arab channels, and we should increase the number of trained professional officers with Arabic language capabilities who can explain America and its policies using Arab media. The 9/11 terrorists used our planes to kill our people. We should be able to use Arab media to inform and educate Arab audiences.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you, Mr. Rugh.
Dr. Telhami, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF PROFESSOR SHIBLEY TELHAMI, ANWAR
SADAT PROFESSOR OF PEACE, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND**

Dr. TELHAMI. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I am honored to testify before this committee again.

I will focus only on satellite television in my testimony. I will make five short points. What I hope to do with these points is really put this in a broader perspective. I think we have focused so much on Alhurra and what it can do and we are sort of losing sight of the bigger picture.

The first point that I want to make is that the prevalent resentment of American foreign policy, whether it is in the Middle East or elsewhere around the world, is of course influenced by the media. The media plays a role, but by and large, it is not shaped by this media. Frankly, there is no Al Jazeera television in Europe and Latin America and Africa and Asia. We have strong anti-Americanism. There are many people in the Middle East that do not

have satellite television. They express just as much anti-Americanism as those who do.

We have seen resentment toward America go down very rapidly in 4 or 5 years, and frankly even before this administration came to office, largely in relation to events on the Arab-Israeli issue, not to media coverage. Just in the spring of 2000, when people were optimistic about peace in the Middle East, over 60 percent of Saudis, according to the State Department, expressed confidence in the United States of America. That dropped rapidly in the fall before our elections, as soon as the negotiations collapsed, and continued to drop into the spring and certainly accelerated after 9/11 and the war on terrorism, reaching the single digits in the past year.

So I think we have to put this, first of all, in perspective. This is not a media-driven phenomenon. The media certainly is a player that we have to take seriously, but at the heart of it, it is something bigger that we have got to address and we cannot ignore that and sort of pin the responsibility on the media as if that is the answer to all our problems in the region and around the world.

Second, I think what Ambassador Rugh pointed out very eloquently is that to the extent that there is a change in the Middle Eastern media in the past decade, it is that we have this market-driven phenomenon. By market-driven phenomenon, we do not mean necessarily that these stations are not owned by a government, as in the case of Al Jazeera, but that they have a different logic because of the technological reach. Because of the commonality of Arabic as a language across the Arab world, the market now is defined as the 300 million Arabs. The prototype for these stations is the Arab, not the Qatari or the Yemeni or the Algerian. But they are trying to reach the largest possible market share among all Arabs, and therefore, the prototype consumer is the Arab. Therefore, by definition, they are trying to appeal to the tastes and fashions of that consumer.

We see that actually very interestingly in the case of Al Jazeera and how it is reporting change. People forget, for example, that in the late 1990s, only 5 years ago, Al Jazeera was being accused in the Arab world of being pro-American, pro-Israeli. Even some accused it, "of being a Zionist agent." The reason why they were doing that was that Al Jazeera was a pioneer in putting on the screen Israeli representatives on a regular basis, the Israeli point of view, somebody in the Knesset, sometimes even putting live the debate in the Knesset. And Arabs were watching and the reason they were watching is they believed Arab-Israeli peace was coming. It was around the corner. Most of them knew little about Israel. They did not know what the Israelis were like. Al Jazeera was bringing Israel to the homes of Riyadh and Rabat in ways that no one else there could do, and for that reason they were accused of being pro-Israeli.

Well, what happened is, the negotiations collapsed. You have a lot of bloodshed. The story was blood and war, and people wanted to see it. In fact, when Al Jazeera came under pressure before the war last year to tone down its coverage of the Palestinian areas, my surveys in the Middle East show that Al Manar gained on it and became No. 1 news on the Arab-Israeli issue. Al Manar is Hizbollah's television in places like Jordan. So, clearly, it is a mar-

ket-driven phenomenon. We have to understand that they are trying to cater to the market.

Third, I am an observer of this media as a scholar. I have been watching it for a long time. I also appear on it. If I look at it in historical perspective, I do not think we have ever seen, frankly, a foreign media that has given more direct and live coverage of American officials than the Arab satellite media. And Mr. Rugh, I think you certainly played a role in the media before historically. You probably could put a perspective on it, but I have never seen it on this scale, in part because people are obsessed certainly with the United States. There are always policies related to Iraq, the Arab-Israeli issue, news conferences live, translated live in Arabic, by the President, by the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, news conferences by generals in the region. Clearly, there is that coverage. Now, you can say the commentary is not that good, and that is probably true, but the coverage is there.

But the coverage itself is undermined less by the discussion afterwards and more by the fact that appearance by American officials often reinforces people's biases because American officials speak with our own paradigm, our own world view and often in the back of our minds, we are speaking to our own constituency at home, to Congress, to our media, how we are going to be covered, and in that sense, in a way reinforces the fears of people in the region rather than alter the perception. And I think we have to become aware of that more often.

Fourth, I think it is fair to say in times of tragedy and war, in times of pain, people listen and watch with their hearts much more than they do with their minds. Certainly if you look at our own coverage in our own media and own public attention to the media, immediately after the tragedy of 9/11 or throughout the war, it is clear that we watch with our hearts. Certainly the media responds to that. Our public, when we are in pain, is not neutral. It cannot be. You are in the middle of pain, you are not going to make an objective assessment, and the media is not neutral because its audience is not neutral.

In that sense, we have to put in perspective that in the Middle East this is a time of pain. There has been a time of pain over the past few years. The war, the bloodshed in Iraq and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the terrorism in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, everywhere, it is a continuous time of pain, and in those times of pain, people are watching with their hearts and those stations that speak to the heart are the ones that get the market share.

Frankly, I think Alhurra's biggest problem, biggest challenge I should say—and I think it has been done professionally, but I see it as a major challenge—is that the notion of neutrality—Ambassador Rugh spoke about the criticism, it does not speak with an pan-Arab voice. Well, I think what they are saying is it is not speaking to the heart. And the question is, when people want to hear through the heart, can it reach them? Well, it is an interesting experiment.

Let me make my final point which goes to another issue. I served recently on the Advisory Committee on Public Diplomacy that Congress mandated. It was a bipartisan committee that presented a report to the administration. Clearly, we understood that public di-

plomacy is important, but in that report we also said that most of the anti-Americanism probably is related to policies that cannot be addressed through public diplomacy. We put it in perspective. Still, we thought there are many things that public diplomacy could address and we believe that the media plays a modest role within public diplomacy but not even a central role. In fact, we addressed largely the sort of issues on educational exchanges, media exchanges, civil society exchanges, communication through language and culture, as well as the media.

In that sense, I think we have to ask the question about the bang for dollar that we are going to get out Alhurra. I happen to think that in absolute terms, the budget is not huge, and when you take into account that Alhurra's annual budget is only one-third of what we spent daily in the war in Iraq, and when you consider that it is an important part of the fight, I think it is not a huge budget. But when you compare it to the rest of the public diplomacy budget, which many of us think is extremely important, I think then you have to ask questions about the rest of the budget because there we found that only \$150 million is allocated to the entire public diplomacy program toward 1.2 billion Muslims around the world, of which only \$25 million a year is allocated to public diplomacy outreach programs. I think that is the question. I think as long as we do not increase the public diplomacy budget on those other programs that really, really badly need it, the proportion of allocation will look less justified. I think in absolute terms, the budget is small.

I think Alhurra should be there. I think there should be an American voice. That American voice may not succeed in the short term, but there is no reason why you cannot build trust over time and wait until such time when you experiment and in fact can reach a broad audience. In the short term, I think it is an uphill battle.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Professor Telhami follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PROFESSOR SHIBLEY TELHAMI

Mr. Chairman, before addressing the role that Al-Hurra television station and other American media can play in influencing the hearts and minds in the Arab world, it is important to put the task in perspective.

First, the prevalent resentment of American foreign policy in the region and around the world is certainly influenced by the media coverage, but ultimately is not shaped by it. Europeans, Africans, Latin Americans, Asians do not watch Al-Jazeera or other Arab satellites, and yet we know from surveys that resentment of American foreign policy is pervasive in these places as well. Moreover, in the Middle East, even those many who have no access to satellite television express deep resentment of the United States. In fact, we know that the rapid decline in confidence in the United States is not a function of the media in the Middle East as such. In a public opinion survey conducted by the State Department in the spring of 2000, for example, over 60% of Saudis expressed confidence in the United States. The level of confidence began rapidly declining after the collapse of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations in the fall of 2000 and continued to decline in the spring. This decline accelerated after the tragedy of 9/11 and the war on terrorism, reaching the single digits in the past year. In short, much of the resentment toward the United States is the consequence of events and policies, not the media coverage as such.

Second, to the extent that there is a profound change in the Arab media that has taken place over the decade, it is this: the media is far more market-driven than ever before. In the past, governments in the region nearly monopolized the media, especially television, and they catered largely to their own domestic constituencies. They generally had captive audiences. Today most Arabs who have access to sat-

elite television have dozens of choices, mostly from outside their own boundaries. They watch what they want to and turn off what they don't. Successful media outlets such as Al-Jazeera prevail in getting a large market share by understanding their consumer. Because the Arabic language is common in all Arab states, language defines the potential size of the market. As such, the target consumer is no longer "the Qatari" or "the Kuwaiti" but "the Arab." In that regard, a station succeeds in getting the largest share of the market by understanding what is most in common among Arabs and catering to it. In that regard, the media more often than not reflects public opinion more than it shapes it. That is not to say that it does not often reinforce opinions or incite passions, but in the end people watch it because it resonates with their preexisting passions and opinions.

Two examples are especially helpful in this regard. Al-Jazeera television, which is now being accused of inciting anti-Americanism and anti-Israeli sentiment in the Arab world, was accused by many Arabs in the late 1990s of being "pro-Israeli" or even "a Zionist agent." The reason for this attitude of many Arabs was that Al-Jazeera was especially bold in putting on the air Israeli voices on a regular basis, including coverage from the Israeli parliament (the Knesset). When they discussed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, they not only hosted Palestinian representatives but also Israeli representatives (which incidentally they still often do). Still, despite that accusation by some Arabs, Al-Jazeera gained a huge share of the market for a simple reason: at the time, most Arabs assumed that peace between Israel and the Arabs was on its way, and most knew little about Israel and were interested in learning. Al-Jazeera brought Israel to homes in Riyadh and Rabat that had not seen Israel before.

As soon as the negotiations collapsed and Israeli-Palestinian violence escalated, the public had less hope for an agreement and was more focused on the bloodshed. Al-Jazeera was there to cover it live. It kept its market share. Last year, just before the Iraq war, when Al-Jazeera came under pressure to lessen coverage of Palestinian-Israeli bloodshed, something else happened. In Jordan, where Al-Jazeera has been number one for news on the Arab-Israeli conflict, its share of the market dropped to number two. Taking its place was a station that focused on the violence even more: Al-Manar Television, run by the Lebanese Hezbollah. In short, while we must understand that each station, including Al-Jazeera, certainly has its own agenda, the degree to which it succeeds in gaining the widest viewership is largely a function of market demand.

Third, today's satellite Arab stations, especially Al-Jazeera, give more direct voice to American officials than ever in the Arab world. Most of these stations give live coverage with verbatim translations of major news conferences by top American officials and military commanders related to Middle Eastern matters. In general, these views are presented without editing, although there are discussions that follow with people who are often critical of American officials but also those who are not. While such coverage gives the U.S. more direct airing of its voice than ever, this is not always a good thing. This is in part because American official views often reinforce the fears and biases of the Arab viewers rather than alleviating them. In addition, American officials, even when they are addressing a Middle Eastern audience, speak with the knowledge that their words are going to be ultimately judged by the American media, Congress, and American public opinion, which therefore incline them to formulate their message in a manner that again reinforces the fears and biases in the region.

Fourth, in times of pain, tragedy, and war, people everywhere, and certainly Arabs, listen and watch with their hearts more than with their minds. We have witnessed this first-hand in the weeks after the 9/11 horror and certainly during the war with Iraq. To some extent we continue to experience this, although to a lesser extent. In the Middle East, the last few years have been times of continued pain, war, and tragedy, including in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in Iraq, in major terrorist attacks in several Arab countries. The public is not neutral, especially in these times. The media, even the professionally-run media, is also not fully neutral: they reflect the passions of the public. If they don't, few would watch. Certainly some reporters and media outlets exploit this deliberately to gain viewership, which is unfortunate but not surprising. But even those who are not deliberately exploitative cannot escape sometimes speaking with and catering to the heart. This is in fact one of the biggest obstacles facing a station like Al-Hurra, which seeks to have a detached, objective analysis of the news during times of pain. Its aim is to be precisely dispassionate while facing a passionate audience. A recent example of this is when Israel assassinated Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Al-Hurra ran a short story as the news broke, then went back to its normal programming, which focused on an episode in American history. Other Arab satellites stayed with the story live

and brought coverage with different perspectives, including live shots, which was bound to gain a far larger share of the market.

Fifth, I have already suggested at the beginning of this statement that the media's role in shaping anti-Americanism is modest, and that the most important factors are policies and events on the ground, not strategies pursued by the media as such. In a recent report by an advisory committee on public diplomacy, which was mandated by Congress, and on which I had the honor of serving, we recognized that the role of public diplomacy itself is relatively small in shaping attitudes, compared with policies, even though this role is still important.

The media plays a relatively modest role even within public diplomacy as such. The report emphasized, especially educational and other civil society exchanges between the U.S. and Arab and Muslim countries, as the best method of reaching the hearts and minds in the long term. Still, the U.S. should have a voice in the region and cannot be absent from the media market, as this market is evolving and will continue to evolve as a consequence of technological change and increasing competition. In that sense it is certainly useful to begin experimenting with television and radio programming that may ultimately have an effect. But two things must be kept in mind in this regard. First, expectations must be put in perspective here. Al-Hurra, no matter how professionally run (and I believe it is professionally run) will not succeed in any foreseeable future in either gaining a significant share of the news market in the region, nor be able to significantly affect public opinion on its own. It must be conceived for now as having an American voice that essentially will gain enough trust overtime to have a positive, even if small, impact. Second, one has to assess its desirability in terms of the bang for the dollar: In the end it comes down to resources. In absolute terms, the funds spent on Al-Hurra are not large if one considers that we're spending nearly three times as much as its entire annual budget in a single day in the Iraq war. But that same amount brings to mind the extraordinarily low amount of money and the low budget that the U.S. government expends on its entire public diplomacy program in the Muslim world of 1.2 billion people. (The estimated budget is \$150 million annually, of which only \$25 million are specifically allocated to public diplomacy outreach programs.) Until that budget expands significantly, as I believe it should, the allocation to Al-Hurra will seem disproportionate.

Thank you Mr. Chairman

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you, Doctor.
Mr. Ford.

STATEMENT OF JESS T. FORD, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRADE, U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Mr. FORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate being invited here today.

I am going to focus a little bit more on management issues with U.S. international broadcasting which is based on several reports we recently issued on international broadcasting and public diplomacy.

Our reports over the last several years have examined a number of organizational, marketing, resource, and performance management challenges facing U.S. international broadcasting overall. Our two most recent reports have addressed the board's principal response to these challenges, the development of a new 5-year strategic approach to international broadcasting, which emphasizes the reach of large audiences and applying modern broadcast techniques and strategically allocating resources to high-priority broadcast markets. Early implementation of this strategy has focused on markets relevant to the war on terrorism and, in particular, the Middle East and Central Asia.

The Broadcasting Board of Governors faces a number of challenges. Key among them is how to achieve large audiences in priority markets while dealing with the disparate organizational structure consisting of five broadcast entities and a mix of Federal

and grantee organizations managed by a part-time board and a collection of outdated and noncompetitive language services that have failed to respond to current market conditions. The disparate structure of U.S. international broadcasting has led to overlapping language services, duplication of program content, redundant news gathering and support services, and difficulties in coordinating broadcast efforts. Marketing challenges include the use of the outmoded program formats and styles, the general lack of target audiences within broadcast markets, poor signal delivery in many areas, and low audience awareness in several major markets.

The board's new strategic approach is designed to address these problems. The board has developed a so-called single system which it hopes to use to consolidate and modernize its broadcast operations. Recent board initiatives such as Radio Sawa broadcast to the Middle East and Radio Farda broadcast to Iran illustrate the board's willingness to serve as a content manager for U.S. international broadcasting and to adopt market-based approaches designed to attract large listening audiences.

Triggered by a desire to better manage its limited resources, the board has used its annual language service review process to identify and reallocate cost savings to higher-priority needs. The process is used to address such complex resource issues as how funds should be allocated among the language services based on their priority and impact, how major broadcast services should be carried in total, what degree of overlap and content duplication should exist among the services, and whether services should be eliminated because they fulfill their broadcast mission.

Since 1999, the board has identified more than \$50 million in actual or potential savings through this process. For example, its language review process from 1999 to 2000 resulted in about \$20 million being reallocated from low-priority impact services to help fund Radio Sawa and Radio Farda. Most recently the board has used the language service process as a vehicle for identifying language services that should be eliminated. For example, based on its review process, the board's fiscal year 2004 budget request to Congress recommended the elimination of 17 Central and Eastern European language services managed by the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, saving approximately \$21 million. These decisions will be critical to the board's ability to channel resources to the higher-priority markets such as broadcast in the Middle East and Central Asia.

In response to a number of our recommendations, the board has revised its strategic planning approach with a goal of reaching large markets as a centerpiece for performance reporting and has identified broadcast credibility and audience awareness as key performance measures. These steps will help the board answer questions about the effectiveness of such efforts as Radio Sawa and TV Alhurra in reaching mass audiences and elites in the Middle East, whether foreign publics perceive U.S. broadcast as being independent of American foreign policy, and whether VOA is effectively promoting the image of the United States and educating foreign audiences about U.S. practices and policies.

In conclusion, our work shows that the board has taken a number of important steps over the last several years to improve stra-

tegic planning and develop a review process to allocate funds to the highest priority needs. The board must continue to look for ways to streamline and modernize broadcasting operations and ensure that resources it receives are effectively meeting the goals, especially in priority markets.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Ford follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JESS T. FORD

U.S. INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING

Challenges Facing the Broadcasting Board of Governors

WHAT GAO FOUND

The Broadcasting Board of Governors has responded to a disparate organizational structure and marketing challenges by developing a new strategic approach to broadcasting which, among other things, emphasizes reaching large audiences through modern broadcasting techniques. Organizationally, the existence of five separate broadcast entities has led to overlapping language services, duplication of program content, redundant newsgathering and support services, and difficulties coordinating broadcast efforts. Marketing challenges include outmoded program formats, poor signal delivery, and low audience awareness in many markets. Alhurra television broadcasts to the Middle East and Radio Farda broadcasts to Iran illustrate the Board's efforts to better manage program content and meet the needs of its target audiences. Although we have not validated available research data, the Board claims that the application of its new approach has led to dramatic increases in listening rates in key Middle East markets.

To streamline its operations, the Board has used its annual language service review process to address such issues as how resources should be allocated among language services on the basis of their priority and impact, what degree of overlap should exist among services, and whether services should be eliminated because they have fulfilled their broadcast mission. Since 1999, the Board has identified more than \$50 million in actual or potential savings through this process.

In response to our recommendations on the Board's strategic planning and performance management efforts, the Board revised its strategic plan to make reaching large audiences in strategic markets the centerpiece of its performance reporting system. The Board also added broadcaster credibility and audience awareness to its array of performance measures and plans to add a measure of whether VOA is meeting its mandated mission.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to provide an overview of the three reports we have issued over the past 4 years on the operations of the Broadcasting Board of Governors.^{1 2 3} These reports have examined a number of organizational, marketing, resource, and performance management challenges facing U.S. international broadcasting. Our two most recent reports have addressed the Board's principal response to these challenges—a new 5-year strategic approach to international broadcasting known as “Marrying the Mission to the Market,” which emphasizes the need to reach large audiences by applying modern broadcast techniques and strategically allocating resources to focus on high-priority broadcast markets. Early implementa-

¹U.S. General Accounting Office, *U.S. International Broadcasting: Strategic Planning and Performance Management System Could Be Improved*, GAO/NSIAD-00-222 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2000).

²U.S. General Accounting Office, *U.S. International Broadcasting: New Strategic Approach Focuses on Reaching Large Audiences but Lacks Measurable Program Objectives*, GAO-03-772 (Washington, D.C.: July 15, 2003).

³U.S. General Accounting Office, *U.S. International Broadcasting: Enhanced Measure of Local Media Conditions Would Facilitate Decisions to Terminate Language Services*, GAO-04-374 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 26, 2004).

⁴U.S. General Accounting Office, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Expand Efforts in the Middle East but Face Significant Challenges*, GAO-04-435T (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 10, 2004).

⁵Overlap exists when a VOA and a surrogate service, such as RFE/RL, broadcast in the same language to the same target audience. Some degree of overlap is appropriate given the varying missions of U.S. broadcast entities. However, in its new strategic plan, the Board identified a 40 percent overlap in its language services as excessive.

tion of this strategy has focused on markets relevant to the war on terrorism, in particular the Middle East and central Asia.

Drawing from our published reports as well as recent testimony on U.S. public diplomacy,⁴ I will talk today about (1) organizational and marketing obstacles and the Board's efforts to overcome them, (2) what the Board has done to manage its limited resources, and (3) the status of Board efforts to develop meaningful performance goals and measures. I will also discuss our recommendations to the Board and the status of its response to them. As part of our work to prepare for this testimony, we met with Board staff to obtain updated program data and current information on the steps the Board has taken to respond to our recommendations. The reports used for this testimony were based on work conducted in accordance with government auditing standards.

SUMMARY

The Broadcasting Board of Governors faces a number of challenges, and key among them is how to achieve large audiences in priority markets while dealing with (1) a disparate organizational structure consisting of five broadcast entities and a mix of federal and grantee organizations managed by a part-time Board and (2) a collection of outdated and noncompetitive language services that have failed to respond to current market conditions. The disparate structure of U.S. international broadcasting has led to overlapping language services, duplication of program content, redundant newsgathering and support services, and difficulties in coordinating broadcast efforts. Marketing challenges include the use of outmoded program formats and styles, the general lack of target audiences within broadcast markets, poor signal delivery in many areas, and low audience awareness in several major markets. The Board's new strategic approach addresses these issues by treating broadcast entities as content providers within a "single system" that the Board oversees to ensure that broadcast content meets the discrete needs of individual markets using modern broadcasting techniques. Recent Board initiatives such as Radio Sawa broadcasts to the Middle East and Radio Farda broadcasts to Iran illustrate the Board's willingness both to serve as the content manager for U.S. international broadcasting and to adopt a market-based approach designed to attract large listening audiences in high-priority markets in support of U.S. strategic objectives in the war on terrorism. Although we have not validated available research data, the Board claims that the application of its new strategic approach has led to dramatic increases in audience listening rates in markets of key strategic interest to the United States.

Triggered by a desire to better manage its limited resources, the Board has used its annual language service review process to identify and reallocate cost savings to fund higher-priority needs, such as expanded initiatives in the Middle East and central Asia. The process is used to address such complex resource issues as how funds should be allocated among services based on their priority and impact, how many broadcast services should be carried, what degree of overlap and content duplication should exist among services, and whether services should be eliminated because they have fulfilled their broadcast mission. Since 1999, the Board has identified more than \$50 million in actual or potential budget savings through the language service review process. From 1999 through 2002, the language service review process resulted in the reallocation of about \$19.7 million from lower-priority or lower-impact language services to higher-priority broadcast needs, including Radio Farda and Radio Sawa. In response to our recommendation, the Board updated its review process to include a specific analysis of overlapping language services.⁵ In its 2003 review, the Board identified \$12.4 million in fiscal year 2004 and 2005 transmission cost and language service overlap reductions that could be reallocated to higher-priority needs, such as expanding Urdu language broadcasts to Pakistan and Persian language television to Iran. Finally, the Board has used its language service review process as a vehicle for identifying which language services should be eliminated.

⁴With passage of the Fiscal Year 2004 Consolidated Appropriations Act, House and Senate conferees adopted the Board's proposal to terminate service to those Central and Eastern European nations that have been invited to become new member states of the European Union or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and have received a Freedom House (a non-profit group reporting on economic, political, and press freedom issues around the world) rating equal to that of the United States. Conferees expressed the expectation that broadcast services would continue in Romanian and Croatian.

⁵The U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994 states that U.S. international broadcasting efforts should, among other things, be consistent with the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States; provide a balanced and comprehensive projection of U.S. thought and institutions; and provide accurate and objective news and information about developments in signifi-

For example, based on its review process, the Board's fiscal year 2004 budget request to Congress recommended the elimination of 17 Central and Eastern European language services managed by Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), saving a projected \$20.9 million for fiscal years 2004 and 2005. While the Board is to be commended for making a difficult decision in this case, our February 2004 report did note that the language service review process lacks an adequate measure of whether domestic media provide accurate, balanced, and comprehensive news and information to national audiences—a condition that Congress expects to be met before RFE/RL language services are terminated.⁶

In response to our recommendations on the Board's strategic planning and performance management efforts, the Board revised its strategic plan to make the goal of reaching large audiences in strategic markets the centerpiece of its performance reporting system. Also in response to our recommendations, the Board added broadcaster credibility and audience awareness to its array of performance measures and plans to add a measure of whether VOA is meeting its mission. These steps will help the Board answer questions about the effectiveness of initiatives such as Radio Sawa and Alhurra (the two entities comprising the Middle East Television Network) in reaching mass audiences and elites in the Middle East, whether foreign publics perceive U.S. broadcast services as being independent of American foreign policy, and whether VOA is effectively promoting the image of the United States and educating foreign audiences about U.S. practices and policies.

BACKGROUND

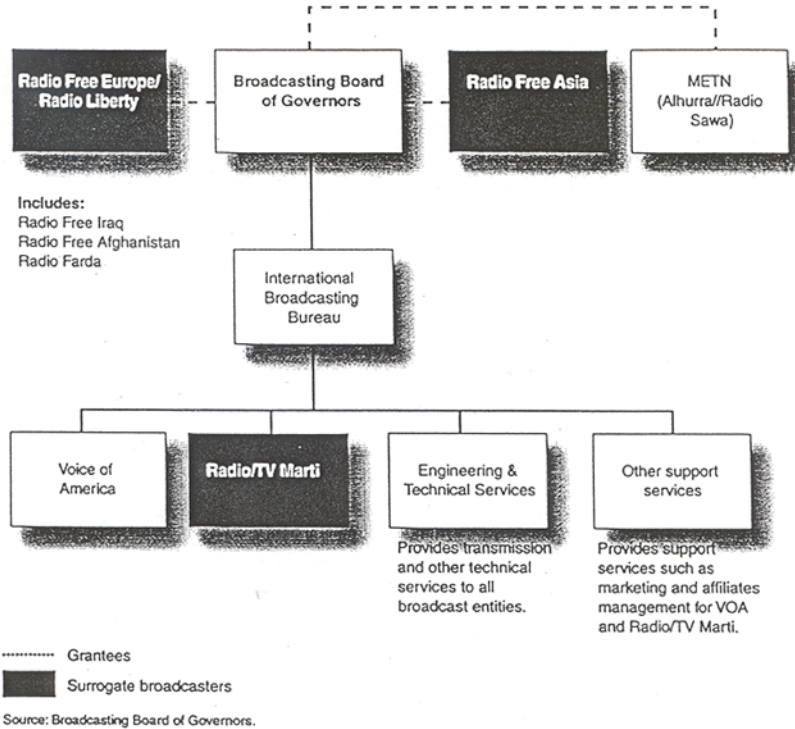
The Broadcasting Board of Governors oversees the efforts of all nonmilitary international broadcasting, which reaches an estimated audience of more than 100 million people each week in more than 125 markets worldwide. The Board manages the operations of the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB), VOA, the Middle East Television Network (Alhurra and Radio Sawa), RFE/RL, and Radio Free Asia (RFA). In addition to serving as a reliable source of news and information, VOA is responsible for presenting U.S. policies through a variety of means, including officially labeled government editorials. Radio/TV Marti, RFE/RL, and RFA were created by Congress to function as "surrogate" broadcasters, designed to temporarily replace the local media of countries where a free and open press does not exist. Created by the Bush administration and the Board, the Middle East Television Network draws its mission from the core purpose of U.S. international broadcasting, which is to promote and sustain freedom by broadcasting accurate and objective news and information about the United States and the world to audiences overseas.⁷

In addition to the stand-alone entities that make up U.S. international broadcasting, Congress and the Board have created other broadcast organizations to meet specific program objectives. Congress created Radio Free Iraq, Radio Free Iran, and Radio Free Afghanistan and incorporated these services into RFE/RL's operations. Under its new strategic approach to broadcasting, the Board and the Bush administration created Radio Sawa, the Afghanistan Radio Network (ARN), Radio Farda, and Alhurra to replace poorly performing services, more effectively combine existing services, and create new broadcast entities where needed. Figure 1 illustrates the Board's current organizational structure.

⁶With passage of the Fiscal Year 2004 Consolidated Appropriations Act, House and Senate conferees adopted the Board's proposal to terminate service to those Central and Eastern European nations that have been invited to become new member states of the European Union or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and have received a Freedom House (a non-profit group reporting on economic, political, and press freedom issues around the world) rating equal to that of the United States. Conferees expressed the expectation that broadcast services would continue in Romanian and Croatian.

⁷The U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994 states that U.S. international broadcasting efforts should, among other things, be consistent with the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States; provide a balanced and comprehensive projection of U.S. thought and institutions; and provide accurate and objective news and information about developments in significant regions of the world.

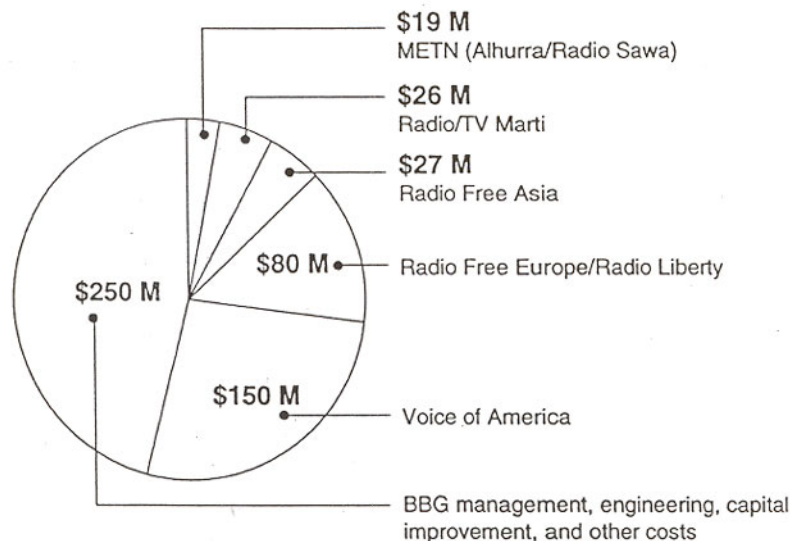
Figure 1: Organizational Structure of U.S. International Broadcasting



VOA, RFE/RL, and RFA are organized around a collection of language services that produces program content. In some countries, more than one entity broadcasts in the same language. These overlapping services are designed to meet the distinct missions of each broadcast entity. Currently, 42 of the Board's 74 language services (or 57 percent) target the same audiences in the same languages. While some degree of overlap is to be expected given the varying missions of the broadcast entities, the Board has concluded that this level of overlap requires ongoing analysis and scrutiny.

The Board's budget for fiscal year 2003 was approximately \$552 million, with nearly half of its resources used to cover transmission, technical support, Board and IBB management staff salaries, and other support costs. Among the broadcast entities, funds are roughly equally divided among VOA and the four other U.S. broadcasting entities. Figure 2 provides a breakout of the Board's fiscal year 2003 budget.

Figure 2: Broadcasting Board of Governors Funding, Fiscal Year 2003



Source: Broadcasting Board of Governors.

DISPARATE STRUCTURE AND AN OUTMODDED BROADCAST APPROACH HAMPER EFFORTS TO REACH LARGE AUDIENCES IN STRATEGIC MARKETS

Our reviews of U.S. international broadcasting reveal that the Board faces the challenges of operating a mix of broadcast entities with varying missions and structures in an environment that provides significant marketing obstacles. As we reported in July 2003, the Board has adopted a new approach to broadcasting that is designed to overcome several of these challenges. The Board's key organizational challenge is the disparate mix of broadcast entities it is tasked with managing.⁸ To address this problem, the Board has adopted a "single system" approach to broadcasting whereby broadcast entities are viewed as content providers and the Board assumes a central role in tailoring this content to meet the demands of individual markets. The Board also faces marketing challenges that include the lack of a unique reason for listeners to tune in, the general lack of target audiences within broadcast markets, and poor-to-fair signal quality for many of the broadcast services. Recent initiatives such as Radio Sawa and Alhurra have addressed these deficiencies, and the Board has required that all broadcast services, to the extent feasible, address these issues as well.

DISPARATE STRUCTURE OF BROADCAST OPERATIONS REMAINS AN ONGOING CHALLENGE

The Board's major organizational challenge is the need to further consolidate and streamline its operations to better leverage existing resources and generate greater program impact in priority markets. According to the Board's strategic plan, "the diversity of the Broadcasting Board of Governors—diverse organizations with different missions, different frameworks, and different constituencies—makes it a challenge to bring all the separate parts together in a more effective whole." As noted in our 2003 report, senior program managers and outside experts with whom we spoke supported considering the option of consolidating U.S. international broadcasting efforts into a single entity.

⁸Our July 2003 report discusses additional organizational issues, including the potential need for a Chief Executive Officer or Chief Operating Officer to handle day-to-day operations for the Board and whether VOA and Radio/TV Marti should be reconstituted as grantees to put them on the same footing as other U.S. broadcast entities.

The Board intends to create a unified broadcasting system by treating the component parts of U.S. international broadcasting as a single system. Under this approach, VOA and other U.S. broadcast entities are viewed as content providers, and the Board's role is to bring this content together to form new services or entities as needed. The single-system approach to managing the Board's diversity requires that the Board actively manage resources across broadcast entities to achieve common broadcast goals. A good example of this strategy in action is Radio Farda, which combined VOA and RFE/RL broadcast content to produce a new broadcast product for the Iranian market. In the case of Radio Sawa, the Board replaced VOA's poorly performing Arabic service with a new broadcast entity. The Board's experience with implementing Radio Sawa suggests that it can be difficult to make disparate broadcast entities work toward a common purpose. For example, Board members and senior planners told us they encountered some difficulties attempting to work with officials to launch Radio Sawa within VOA's structure and were later forced to constitute Radio Sawa as a separate grantee organization. While this move was needed to achieve the Board's strategic objectives, it contributed to the further fragmentation of U.S. international broadcasting.

NEW INITIATIVES ADDRESS MARKETING CHALLENGES

The Board's strategic plan comments openly on the marketing challenges facing U.S. international broadcasters, specifically that many language services lack a unique reason for listeners or viewers to tune in; few language services have identified their target audiences—a key first step in developing a broadcast strategy; many language services have outmoded formats and programs with an antiquated, even Cold War, sound and style; and three-quarters of transmitted hours have poor or fair signal quality.

Consistent with its “Marrying the Mission to the Market” philosophy, the Board has sought to address these deficiencies in key markets with new initiatives in Afghanistan, Iran, and the Middle East that support the war on terrorism. The first project under the new approach, Radio Sawa (recently added to the new Middle East Television Network), was launched in March 2002 using many of the modern, market-tested broadcasting techniques and practices prescribed in its strategic plan, including identifying a target audience, researching the best way to attract the target audience, and delivering programming to the Middle East in a contemporary and appealing format. The Board's other recent initiatives also have adhered to this new approach by being tailored to the specific circumstances of each target market. These initiatives include the Afghanistan Radio Network, Radio Farda service to Iran, and the Alhurra satellite service to the Middle East. Table 1 describes the Board's recent projects that support the war on terrorism.

Table 1: The Board's Recent Initiatives that Support the War on Terrorism

Initiative	Launch date	Project description
Radio Sawa ¹	March 2002	A modern Arabic-language network that broadcasts music, news, and information to a target audience of 15- to 29-year olds in the Middle East via a combination of FM, medium wave, short wave, digital audio satellite, and Internet transmission resources. Separate streams are targeted to Iraq, Jordan and the West Bank, the Persian Gulf, Egypt, and Morocco. All five streams have a differentiated music program; however, the news is similar on the four non-Iraq streams. Board officials say that Radio Sawa broadcasts between 10 to 15 minutes of news each hour.
Afghanistan Radio Network	August 2002	Afghanistan Radio Network is a coordinated stream of VOA Dari and Pashto and RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan radio programming. The network targets the broad Afghani population and currently broadcasts 24 hours, 7 days a week on FM and the Internet. It broadcasts 12 hours in Dari and 12 hours in Pashto daily. It features hourly regional and global news and information coverage as well as reports on issues such as health, education, politics, human rights, women's rights, and economic reconstruction.

Table 1: The Board's Recent Initiatives that Support the War on Terrorism—Continued

Initiative	Launch date	Project description
Radio Farda	December 2002	Radio Farda combines the efforts of VOA and RFE/RL into a single service managed by RFE/RL. Radio Farda targets its broadcasts to the under-30 youth in Iran. It broadcasts a combination of popular Persian and Western music and a total of 8 hours of news and information content daily, focusing on regional coverage and developments relating to Iran. News updates are given at least twice an hour, with longer news programming in the morning and evening. It broadcasts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via medium wave, digital audio satellite, and the Internet, as well as 21 hours a day via short wave.
Alhurra ²	February 2004	With a focus on attracting a broad audience in the Middle East, the Alhurra satellite television channel provides news, current affairs, and entertainment programming on a 24 hours, 7 days a week basis. Programming focuses on news and information, including hourly news updates, daily hour-long newscasts, and current affairs talk shows. The channel also broadcasts information or educational shows on subjects including health and fitness, entertainment, sports, and science and technology.

¹ Recently added to the Middle East Television Network.

² Part of the Middle East Television Network. Q02
Source: Broadcasting Board of Governors.

Although we have not validated available research data, the Board claims that implementation of these marketing improvements has led to dramatic increases in audience listening rates. For example, based on surveys conducted by ACNielsen, the Board maintains that Radio Sawa is now the number one international broadcaster in six countries in the Middle East,⁹ reaching an average weekly audience of about 38 percent of the general population and about 49 percent of its 15- to 29-year-old target audience across all six countries. These levels far exceed the 1 to 2 percent audience reach of the VOA Arabic service, which Radio Sawa replaced. In addition, the Board's main research contractor—InterMedia—has indicated that as of March 2004, Radio Farda is the leading international broadcaster in Iran—achieving an average weekly listenership of 15 percent, which is 10 percent more than the combined weekly audiences for VOA and RFE/RL's prior services to Iran. Board officials have told us that preliminary audience reach data for the Board's satellite channel Alhurra will be available by June of this year. While the audience numbers on Radios Sawa and Farda appear to be very positive, as we reported in July 2003, U.S. broadcasters suffer from a credibility problem. To address this issue, we recommended that the Board adopt measures of broadcaster credibility, which the Board has recently implemented.

In addition to these new initiatives, the Board has tasked all language services with adopting the tenets of its new approach, such as identifying a target audience and improving signal quality, to the maximum extent possible within existing budget constraints. They hope that these improvements will lead to significant audience boosts for a number of higher- and lower-priority services that suffer from very low listening rates. For example, data from the Board's 2003 language review show that more than one-quarter of all language services had listening rates of fewer than 2 percent at that time.

⁹ Countries surveyed include Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Morocco. Research for Egypt, Qatar, UAE, and Kuwait was conducted in July and August 2003. Research for Jordan and Morocco was conducted in February 2004. The six countries covered by the survey represent only a portion of Radio Sawa's target broadcast area—21 Muslim-majority countries in North Africa, the Near East, and the Persian Gulf. Notably absent from the Board's performance statistics are data on major target countries such as Sudan (about 21 million adults), Algeria (about 21 million adults), and Saudi Arabia (about 14 million adults).

LANGUAGE SERVICE REVIEW USED TO REALLOCATE MILLIONS TO HIGHER-PRIORITY
BROADCAST NEEDS

The Board manages its limited resources through its annual language service review process, which is used to address such issues as how resources should be allocated among services based on their priority and impact, how many broadcast services should be carried, what degree of overlap and content duplication¹⁰ should exist among services, and whether services should be eliminated because they have fulfilled their broadcast mission. This process responds to the congressional mandate that the Board periodically review the need to add and delete language services. The Board has interpreted this mandate to include the expansion and reduction of language services. Since 1999, the Board has identified more than \$50 million in actual or potential savings through the language service review process by moving resources from lower- to higher-priority services, by eliminating language services, and by reducing language service overlap and transmission costs.

REVIEW PROCESS USED TO ADDRESS COMPLEX RESOURCE ISSUES

As noted in our July 2003 report, the Board's strategic plan concludes that if U.S. international broadcasting is to become a vital component of U.S. foreign policy, it must focus on a clear set of broadcast priorities. The plan notes that trying to do too much at the same time fractures this focus, extends the span of control beyond management capabilities, and siphons off precious resources. As discussed in our report, the Board determined that current efforts to support its broadcast languages are "unsustainable" with current resources, given its desire to increase impact in high-priority markets. Our survey of senior program managers revealed that a majority supported significantly reducing the total number of language services and the overlap in services between VOA and the surrogate broadcasters. We found that 18 of 24 respondents said that too many language services are offered. When asked how many countries should have more than one U.S. international broadcaster providing service in the same language, 23 of 28 respondents said this should occur in only a few countries or no countries at all.

The Board's annual language service review process serves as the Board's principal tool for managing these complex resource questions. This process has evolved into an intensive program and budget review that culminates with ranked priority and impact listings for each of the Board's 74 language services. These ranked lists become the basis for proposed language service reductions or eliminations and provide the Board with an analytical basis for making such determinations using measures of U.S. strategic interests, audience size, press freedom, and a host of other factors. Since the first language service review process began in 1999 and up through 2002, the Board has reduced the scope of operations of over 25 language services based on their priority and impact rankings and reallocated about \$19.7 million to help fund higher-priority broadcast needs such as Radio Sawa and Radio Farda.

As discussed in our February 2004 report, a clear example of the language service review process in action was the Board's recent proposal to eliminate 17 Central and Eastern European language services which served to reduce the overall number of language services and eliminate several overlapping services where the Board believed each broadcast entity's mission had been completed. This decision resulted in nonrecurring budget savings of about \$8.8 million for fiscal year 2004 and recurring annual savings of about \$12.1 million. Our only criticism of this decision was that the Board's language service review process did not include a measure of press freedom that gauges whether the press acts responsibly and professionally.¹¹ This is a significant omission in the Board's current measure, given the congressional concern that RFE/RL's broadcast operations not be terminated until a country's domestic media meet this condition.¹² Board officials acknowledged that their existing press freedom measure could be updated to include information on media responsibility

¹⁰ Content duplication occurs when VOA and another U.S. broadcast entity provide the same type of information to the same audience. Board analysis shows that VOA carries more information about America than the surrogates and surrogates carry more local news than VOA. However, there are areas of overlap in content because each broadcast entity carries news about America, as well as international, regional, and local events.

¹¹ The Board's current press freedom measure index relies heavily on Freedom House's press freedom index, which focuses on free speech issues, the plurality of news sources, whether media are economically independent from the government, and whether supporting institutions and laws function in the professional interest of the press. The Freedom House index is used and respected by media groups around the world. However, it does not assess whether domestic media provide accurate, balanced, and comprehensive news and information.

¹² See Title III of P.L. 103-236, as amended by P.L. 106-113, Appendix G, Section 503.

and professional quality, and work is under way to develop a more comprehensive measure for the Board's 2004 language service review.

REVIEW OF OVERLAPPING LANGUAGE SERVICES IMPLEMENTED

In our September 2000 report, we cited the Board's concerns about overlapping language services and its plans to address this issue in subsequent iterations of the language service review process. In our July 2003 report we again raised the issue of language service overlap and content duplication between VOA and the surrogates. We also noted that while the Board's strategic plan identified overlap as a challenge, it failed to answer questions about when it is appropriate to broadcast VOA and surrogate programming in the same language.

The Board has responded to our observations and recommendations by incorporating a review of overlapping services in its language service review process for 2003. The Board developed several approaches to dealing with overlap. For example, services can be "merged" by having one service subsume another (as was the case with Radio Farda). A second approach is to run alternating services, as is the case with the Afghanistan Radio Network, which runs VOA and RFE/RL programming on a single broadcast stream. Another approach is to simply terminate one or both overlapping services. All of the Board's overlapping services were assessed with these different approaches in mind. As a result of this analysis, the Board identified an estimated \$4.9 million in fiscal year 2004 and 2005 savings from overlap services that could be redirected to higher-priority broadcasting needs, such as expanded Persian language television for Iran and expanded Urdu language radio for Pakistan.¹³

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REVISED TO PLACE A GREATER FOCUS ON RESULTS

Mr. Chairman, the Board has revised its strategic planning and performance management system to respond to the recommendations in our July 2003 report aimed at improving the measurement of its results. In that report, we recommended that the Board's new strategic plan include a goal designed to gauge progress toward reaching significant audiences in markets of strategic interest to the United States. Our report also recommended that the Board establish key performance indicators relating to the perceived credibility of U.S. broadcasters, whether audiences are aware of U.S. broadcast offerings in their area, and whether VOA is achieving its mission of effectively explaining U.S. policies and practices to overseas audiences.¹⁴

REACHING LARGE AUDIENCES IN KEY MARKETS

In response to our recommendation for a goal that would measure progress in reaching large audiences in markets of strategic interest to the United States, the Board replaced the seven strategic goals in its plan with a single goal focused on this core objective.¹⁵ The goal is supported by a number of performance indicators (at the entity and language service level) that are designed to measure the reach of U.S. international broadcasting efforts and whether programming is delivered in the most effective manner possible. Weekly listening rates at the entity level and target audience numbers by language service provide key measures of the Board's reach. Other program effectiveness measures include program quality, the number of broadcast affiliates, signal strength, Internet usage, and cost per listener.

BROADCASTER CREDIBILITY

In response to our recommendation for a measure of broadcaster credibility to identify whether target audiences believe what they hear, the Board added such a measure to its performance management system. Reaching a large listening or view-

¹³The Board also identified an estimated \$7.5 million in fiscal year 2004 and 2005 savings from transmission reductions during its 2003 language service review.

¹⁴This Board's strategic planning and performance management system includes its 5-year strategic plan, Results Act reporting (annual performance plans and reports), the Office of Management and Budget's new Program Assessment Rating Tool, the annual language service review process, and annual program reviews of individual language services.

¹⁵We also reported that efforts to assess the effectiveness of the Board's new approach to broadcasting may be hampered by the lack of details on how the Board intends to implement each of its program objectives. Our September 2000 and July 2003 reports both noted that the Board's performance plans lacked specifics on implementation strategies, resource requirements, and project time frames. The Board acknowledged these deficiencies and said that major changes are slated for future planning efforts.

ing audience is of little use if audiences largely discount the news and information portions of broadcasts. Our survey of senior program managers and discussions with Board staff and outside groups all suggest the possibility that U.S. broadcasters (VOA in particular) suffer from a credibility problem with foreign audiences, who may view VOA and other broadcasters as biased sources of information. InterMedia, the Board's audience research contractor, told us that it was working on a credibility index for another customer that could be adapted to meet the Board's needs and, when segmented by language service, would reveal whether there are significant perception problems among key target audiences. However, to develop a similar measure, InterMedia told us that the Board would need to add several questions to its national survey instruments.

AUDIENCE AWARENESS

In response to our finding that the Board lacked a measure of audience awareness, the Board has added such a measure to its performance management system. We determined this measure would help the Board answer a key question of effectiveness: whether target audiences are even aware of U.S. international broadcasting programming available in their area. Board officials have stated that this measure would help the Board understand a key factor in audience share rates and what could be done to address audience share deficiencies. We found that the Board could develop this measure because it already collects information on language service awareness levels in its audience research and in national surveys for internal use.

VOA MISSION EFFECTIVENESS

Finally, in response to our finding that the Board lacked a measure of whether target audiences hear, understand, and retain information broadcast by VOA on American thought, institutions, and policies, Board officials we spoke with told us that they are currently developing this measure for inclusion in the Board's performance management system. The unique value-added component of VOA's broadcasting mission is its focus on issues and information concerning the United States, our system of government, and the rationale behind U.S. policy decisions. Tracking and reporting these data are important in determining whether VOA is accomplishing its mission. Officials from the Board's research firm noted that developing a measure of this sort is feasible and requires developing appropriate quantitative and qualitative questions to include in the Board's ongoing survey activities.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be happy to respond to any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have at this time.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you, Mr. Ford.
Dr. Ghareeb.

STATEMENT OF DR. EDMUND GHAREEB, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF MIDDLE EAST HISTORY AND POLITICS, SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Dr. GHAREEB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be here.

Let me say right now that there is a credibility gap between the United States and the Middle East, and we have heard about this quite a bit today and in the media. Due to recent events, this disparity is increasing at a startling pace. Many in the region judge, as we have heard, the United States mainly on its foreign policy and how it affects the people in the region. The United States needs to reach out to the people of the area and to try to close that widening gap.

There have been many outreach projects in the past. The USIA and the Voice of America have been there. Alhurra and Radio Sawa are the latest media endeavors by Congress and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and they are the most comprehensive initiatives so far to try to reach the people of the area. While radio and

satellite ownership has exploded in recent years, reaching people is by no means an easy task.

Even before Alhurra was on the air, many people in the area and in the region said that it would be a mouthpiece for the U.S. Government. In the months ahead, Alhurra will have to prove itself over and over again by providing credible and objective news coverage and analysis, by interviewing people who do not always agree with the current administration and its policies.

Effective communication also requires taking your audience's views, values, feelings, and sense of identity into account. It is not enough to tell people what is on your mind. You have to listen to them. You have to find out what is on their minds.

If Alhurra and Radio Sawa are able to prove that their news is reliable and free of government influence, they will have a unique opportunity to cover stories that put U.S. policies in context and debate them freely. It bears repeating, however, that there should be no interference from the U.S. Government. As you know, most Arab media outlets are state run. Governments influence what is covered and how to cover it. Consequently, people in the region are quite suspicious of all official media.

Furthermore, there is a great deal of competition, as you have heard today from Ambassador Rugh and Professor Telhami. There is saturation of the media environment in the Middle East. The information technology revolution, the CNN factor, dissatisfaction with their own media and dissatisfaction with the way the Western media covered the Gulf War of 1991 contributed to the rise of a new and more independent Arab print and TV media. Today, in addition to the BBC and Radio Monte Carlo, many people are getting their news and entertainment from Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, Al Hayat-LBC, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, ANN, Future, Radio Orient, NBC, Al Manar, and many others.

There have been several references in the news recently to the allegation that media outlets such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya are sparking the recent uprisings and encouraging people to take a stand against the coalition forces. I think it is important to remember that the media in the region mirror the feelings and the attitudes of their audiences. They place as much emphasis on reflecting the emotions and the attitudes in the region as they do on the events of the day. They may influence people, but the sentiment is already there. They are not creating the problem. That is where Alhurra and Radio Sawa have the opportunity, the potential to play a big role. They have the opportunity to provide the region with a straightforward approach to the news free of emotional coloration and innuendo.

When Alhurra started, an American journalist interviewed a Jordanian about what he thought of a program he had just watched, and the man said that was all right, that he had heard different people who represented a spectrum of views on the program. But when told that Alhurra was financed by the U.S. Government, he decided the program was terrible. The change in attitude was perceptible.

A serious problem likely to face media coverage is that the same events mean different things to different audiences. Presenting events only as they are seen through American eyes may alienate

Arabs and Muslims. To many Americans, the fighters in Fallujah or in Najaf are insurgents and terrorists. For many Iraqis and Muslims, they are resistance fighters.

When American forces in Iraq attack the insurgents in Fallujah, it is perceived by many Arabs and Muslims because of collateral damage, the death of innocent bystanders, as though the U.S. is attacking the city and its inhabitants. When mosques in the city broadcast prayers appealing to God under fire, it looks like the U.S. is attacking Islam. These are emotionally charged situations, and emotions differ depending on one's identity. The challenge facing the U.S. officials and the U.S. media today is that messages are being broadcast from one side to the other not just through the media, but by the unspoken messages conveyed by symbols and pictures.

Iraq and the Palestinian question, as we have also heard earlier, are very important issues for many Arabs and Muslims. Public diplomacy, accompanied by a very credible media performance by Radio Sawa and Alhurra, will not by themselves sway the majority of Arab and Muslim public opinion unless the Muslims and Arabs come to believe that U.S. policies are taking their concerns and aspirations into account.

I also think it is important to point out that, yes, the sentiments against American policies is very strong right now. However, feelings toward the U.S. and the American people are not all negative. When you talk to people in the Middle East about personal freedom, about democracy, about values that Americans enjoy and advocate, it is something they admire and are intrigued by. American technological, scientific and educational achievements, as well as American products are widely admired.

Another thing, of course, is American culture, music, movies, television, and books, you name it, people in the region are watching, listening and reading. And from the popularity of Radio Sawa, I think the same can be said for music. Several young people that I talked to in the Middle East said that Radio Sawa has really neat songs and music, so they turn the volume up when the songs are on, but some of them turn it down when the news comes on because they think the news is slanted, although many continue to listen.

Overall, the United States needs to foster positive images of itself and of its motives abroad and use them to help rebuild relations with the people of the Middle East. Right now positive American values and images are not getting exported nearly enough. The airwaves and newspapers in the Middle East are full of stories of the United States trying to dominate the region and to dictate its views upon the people of the Middle East. They look at Iraq and ask if this is a war of freedom and democracy or a fight for oil and hegemony. They wonder about American commitment to freedom of speech when the CPA closes a very small newspaper or seeks to constrain popular satellite channels.

The United States needs a voice. They need many voices, voices of moderation, voices that speak clearly and objectively about the events in the Middle East and around the world. There is not a panacea or a quick fix that will change sentiments all at once. It

will be a long process. I am not saying that you will be able to reach everyone.

However, I would like to applaud your efforts, whether it is through Alhurra and Radio Sawa or by reaching out to speak to Middle East media or through other fora, to begin to bridge the gap between the people of the region and the American people.

Thank you again for allowing me to appear before you today.
[The prepared statement of Dr. Ghareeb follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. EDMUND GHAREEB

Thank you for inviting me to testify today. Let me start by saying that right now there is a credibility gap between the United States and the Middle East and due to recent events; this disparity is increasing at a startling pace. Many times people in the Middle East will judge the U.S. based solely on its foreign policy and how it affects them. Now is the time the U.S. needs to reach out and try and close this expanding gap. Through government officials, like you, the U.S. reaches out to leaders in the Middle East. However, there is a constituency that is much more important and we need to make every effort to reach out to them—the people who live in the Middle East.

In the past, there have been different outreach projects to connect with Middle Easterners, but they were specialized and could only reach a specific segment of the population. Some excellent programs were also undertaken by the USIA. Alhurra and Radio Sawa, the latest media endeavors by Congress and the Broadcasting Board of Governors are the most comprehensive initiative to reach the people of the Middle East, without going through a government channel. Radio and satellite television ownership has exploded in recent years and is quickly becoming commonplace in many households in the Middle East. But, still reaching people in the Middle East in their homes is by no means an easy task.

Even before Alhurra was on the air, many newspapers and people in the region said it would be a mouthpiece for the United States government. In the months ahead Alhurra will have to prove itself over and over again, by providing credible and objective news coverage and analysis and by interviewing people who do not always agree with the current administration and its policies.

Effective communication, however, requires taking your audience's values, feelings and sense of identity into account. It is also not enough to tell people what is on your mind. We have to also listen to what is on their minds.

If Alhurra and Radio Sawa are able to prove that their news is reliable and free of government influence, they will have a unique opportunity to cover stories that put U.S. policies in context and debate them freely. It bears repeating, however, there should be no interference from the U.S. government. As you know, most Arab media outlets are state run. They influence what is covered and how to cover it. Consequently, people in the region are quite suspicious of their official media. Furthermore, the Middle East is becoming saturated with radio and TV channels as well as the growing influence of the Internet. The information technology revolution, the CNN factor, and general unhappiness with their own official media contributed to the rise of the new Arab print and TV media. Today, in addition to the BBC and Radio Monte Carlo, many Arabs are getting their news and entertainment from channels such as Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya, Al Hayat-LBC, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, ANN, Future as well as Radio Orient, Orbit and Dream in addition to their own government channels and to channels beamed from the outside.

There have been several references in the news recently to the allegation that media outlets such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya are sparking the recent uprisings and encouraging people to take a stand against Coalition forces. I want to take issue with that point. The media that are in the region, like the U.S. media, mirror the feelings and attitudes of their audiences. They place as much emphasis on reflecting the emotions and the attitudes in the region, as they do the events of the day. Yes, they may influence people, but the sentiment is already there, they are not creating something out of nothing. That is where Alhurra and Radio Sawa can have the biggest impact. They have the opportunity to provide the region with a straightforward approach to the news free of emotional coloration and innuendo.

When Alhurra started, an American journalist asked a Jordanian man what he thought of the program he had just watched, and the man said it was alright, that he had heard different people who represented a spectrum of views on the program; but when told that Alhurra was financed by the U.S. government, he decided the program was terrible; the change in attitude was noticeable.

A serious problem likely to face media coverage is that, sometimes, the same events mean different things to different audiences. Presenting events only as they are seen through American eyes may alienate Arabs and Muslims. To many Americans the fighters in Falluja or Najaf are insurgents and terrorists. For many Iraqis and Muslims they are resistance fighters and if they are killed they are martyrs.

When American forces in Iraq attack the insurgents in Falluja, it is perceived by many Arabs and Muslims (because of collateral damage, the death of women and children, innocent bystanders) as though the U.S. is attacking Falluja, the city, and its inhabitants. When mosques in the city broadcast prayers, appealing to God, under fire, it looks like the U.S. is attacking Islam. These are emotionally charged situations, and the emotions differ depending on whether one is an Iraqi or an American. The challenge facing U.S. officials and U.S. media today is that message are being broadcast from one side to the other not just through the media but by the unspoken messages conveyed by symbols and by pictures.

It is also important to remember that strong opposition exists in the region to U.S. policies. Public diplomacy accompanied by a very credible media performance by Radio Sawa and Alhurra will not, by themselves, sway the majority of Arab and Muslim public opinion unless they come to believe that U.S. policies are reflecting their own concerns and aspirations for fairness, justice, a better way of life and increased political participation.

I also think it is important to point out that, yes, the sentiment against American policies is very strong right now, and our foreign policy, particularly in Iraq and in the Israeli-Palestinian arena, is at the heart of that. However, feelings towards the U.S. and the American people are not all negative. When you talk to people in the Middle East about personal freedom, democracy and values that Americans enjoy it is something they admire and are intrigued by.

Another thing that is almost universally liked about America is our pop culture. Music, movies, television and books—you name it and they are watching, listening and reading it. A quick glance at any television channel lineup or movie marquee and you are bound to find “Friends” or the latest blockbuster hit. And from the popularity of Radio Sawa, I think the same can be said for music. Several young people that I spoke to in the Middle East say that Radio Sawa has really neat songs and music, so they turn the volume up when the songs are on, but some turn it down when the news comes on because they feel that the news is slanted.

The U.S. needs to foster positive images of itself and its motives abroad and use them to help rebuild relations with the people of the Middle East. Right now, positive American values and images are not getting exported nearly enough. The airwaves and newspapers in the Middle East are full of examples of the United States trying to dominate the region and to dictate its views upon the people of the Middle East. They look at Iraq and ask if this is a war for freedom and democracy, or a fight for oil and hegemony? They wonder about American commitment to the freedom of speech when the CPA closes a small newspaper or seeks to constrain popular satellite channels.

The U.S. needs a voice out there that is a voice of moderation—to speak clearly and objectively about the events in the Middle East and around the world. There is not a panacea or quick fix that will change sentiment all at once; it will be a long process. I am also not saying that you will be able to reach everyone.

However, I would like to applaud your efforts, whether it is through Alhurra and Radio Sawa, or by reaching out to speak to Middle East media, to bridge the gap between the U.S. and the Middle East, and to begin to narrow the gap between the people of the region and the American people.

Thank you again for allowing me to appear before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you. Unfortunately, the length of today’s presentations have not left us with a great deal of time for questions, but I would like to ask just a few.

First, Ambassador Rugh, you talk about your perception of the difficulty in penetrating Arab markets with Alhurra. The previous panel presented information, a recent survey as to the number of satellite viewers that had watched Alhurra programming in the past week, and at least in a number of countries, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, it was over 35 percent, and in several other countries, Syria, UAE, and Saudi Arabia, it was 20 percent or even a little higher.

Are those good numbers? We would, obviously, like those to be better. Is that a pleasant surprise to you after only 2 months of broadcasting and what do you think we should be hoping for in this point in the process?

Ambassador RUGH. Mr. Chairman, I think those are good numbers as far as they go. It is early in the history of Alhurra. We do not know what the long term will be. The numbers may be high possibly because of curiosity for a new medium. As I tried to emphasize, it is considered a U.S. Government broadcasting instrument, and American policy is the focus of everybody's attention in the Middle East now. They want to know what it is. They want to understand it. They are puzzled. Everybody I talked to in the region says explain to me why our policy is what it is. So there is interest and there is enormous potential, but the potential has to be capitalized on if we are going to maintain the market. We have to do quality programming. We have to meet the expectations of the audience or it is going to disappear.

Dr. TELHAMI. May I followup on this briefly?

Senator SUNUNU. Yes, you may. But I would like actually each of our panelists to address the following question, and doctor, you are welcome to talk about the perception as well.

The second question is to what extent have those of you who have watched satellite TV broadcasts, especially those broadcasts of government-owned stations in the region, how have you seen or noticed those stations changing over the last several years, first, with the advent of Al Jazeera, which was certainly a different format, even though it was government-funded, and second, with Alhurra? We will certainly begin with you, Dr. Telhami.

Dr. TELHAMI. Thank you. Let me just say on the previous question, because I am doing surveys actually about people watching media. I have done one a year ago. I am doing that now, and I will probably have some very good data on Alhurra compared with others.

Mr. Pattiz was extremely careful to say these are preliminary numbers because they were not systematic yet. For example, the question may have been, have you ever watched Alhurra? Which is a very different question from, do you consistently watch it for the news? My suspicion is the numbers of Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya probably are 80 to 90 percent, and the question that we usually ask, when we do a survey, to get at whether a station has an impact or not, is we say, which is your first choice for news, which is your second choice, which is your third choice. We look at three choices. And then we have, do you watch it once a week, twice a week, five times a week? And we find the intensity, of course, is all that matters. So it is too early to tell, obviously. It is strong, but these numbers really cannot tell you yet the story.

Now, if you look at Al Jazeera—and I have been watching it for a long time and I participate in some of these debates—in my judgment, by and large, if you compare the media now, the satellite phenomenon, with what existed in the Arab world a decade ago, there is no question that it is far better than it was and you get far more varieties of views than you did before and it is far more accurate than it was a decade ago. It is flawed and there are a lot of problems, and they are learning through it, but there is no ques-

tion in my mind that it is far better than it was. There are some programs that are absolutely superior. There are some programs that we would be proud to put on our own television, including news programs. Al Arabiya has an excellent discussion show with one of the leading journalists here that has a variety of views that is a high-quality discussion that we would be impressed with on our own television. And they have others that we would not want to put on our high-quality television. So overall, I think it has been better, but it is certainly not perfect.

Senator SUNUNU. Ambassador Rugh.

Ambassador RUGH. Mr. Chairman, if I could add something on the polls because you asked a very good question. I have not seen the polls that have been referred to, but I think the best poll that would give us good information about the effectiveness of Alhurra and Radio Sawa as well would be to take a poll at the time of a major event, for example, the capture of Saddam Hussein or a speech by President Bush, and see what channel the audiences select. It is not enough to say, did you watch Alhurra this week, as Professor Telhami says. You want to know what their choice was on a crucial issue like a major political event, particularly in the Middle East. Are they watching Alhurra for coverage of Fallujah? Are they watching it for coverage of the West Bank and Gaza?

On the question of change over time, I agree completely with Professor Telhami. It has been a dramatic change. The pioneering role of Al Jazeera, which is way out ahead of the others, has forced other broadcasting stations, even directly government-controlled ones like Abu Dhabi television, to improve the quality of their programming, the quality of their reporting. We often in America focus on the discussion programs and the commentaries, but the news reporting of Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya is outstanding. Unless Alhurra can match that, nobody is going to watch.

Senator SUNUNU. Ambassador Rugh, I think in some previous testimony, you talk about producing programs for placement on other stations, local stations throughout the Arab world. If that approach were pursued, do you think it likely that the governments would give us access on stations for the kind of programming, either balanced programming or even programming that might be critical of these governments? Is it realistic to expect that we would get placement?

Ambassador RUGH. I think yes, Mr. Chairman. I think particularly those satellite stations that are competing for market share like Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. We can get access to them. Professor Telhami has been on them. Professor Ghareeb has been on them. I have been on them. They do not ban American comments, and the more Americans to participate, the better, and they welcome them. I know that for a fact. American officials ought to speak more on television.

As far as placement goes, as a public affairs officer in Egypt in Saudi Arabia and other places, I found it fairly easy to place good material on local programs. Now, if it was a program that directly criticized the host government for corruption, they might not take it, but if it is a well-produced program, yes, they will take it. This is a hungry medium that needs material and they will take our material too.

Senator SUNUNU. Dr. Ghareeb, what do you think about the value or the efficacy of taking privately produced media broadcasts, whether it is on a major station like CNN or MSNBC, Fox, et cetera, and translating that? Are Arab translations of American programming of value or interest in the channels or the outlets we have been speaking of?

Dr. GHAREEB. First, let me comment briefly on the role of the new media in the Arab world. I think it has revolutionized the way people receive their information and their news. They have forced government media to lift the ceiling on debate and discussion. We are seeing discussion of issues that have been taboo, as Ambassador Rugh said earlier, issues that have to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict, that have to do with sex, that have to do with religion, secularism, Kurdish nationalism, and numerous other issues.

There is no doubt that the record is mixed. On the one hand, they have raised this debate. On the other hand, they have not brought about the changes that a lot of people thought that they were going to do, that they were going to increase democratization and political participation because the government still owns some of these channels and we do not see a real demand for accountability when it comes to issues dealing with domestic problems, domestic corruption, questions of the budget, for example. These are not focused on enough. In fact, some people think that the media have transformed the audiences where there is now an audience lethargy. People sort of participate vicariously through the media instead of trying to bring about changes of the government.

As to the types of American programs which could be translated, if they could be translated well, some of them could perhaps find an audience in the Arab world. For example, I think something like the Lehrer News Hour might be an excellent program. I think that program would also have an audience in the Arab world. But at the same time, I do not think you can use all programs because the values here are very important. The way you communicate with people in the Middle East is a little different from communicating with people in the United States.

And this is in part the problem of U.S. officials because if you take a look at Al Jazeera or Al Arabiya and many others, you will find that American officials often appear on these channels regularly. Sometimes I have seen President Bush speaking on Al Jazeera or on Al Arabiya. They were airing a speech live while it was not being aired on American television. But the problem sometimes is that the message is not well understood over there. The values are different and that is something that has to be taken into account.

Senator SUNUNU. Mr. Ford, from your testimony, I get the impression that the BBG has been somewhat responsive in dealing with recommendations having to do with overlap and revisiting the format or the structure of its language services. Are there any areas or any recommendations that the GAO has made where the BBG response has been lacking or has been slower than you would hope?

Mr. FORD. I would not say that they responded negatively to our recommendations. I think some of them are issues related to whether they have resources to implement more surveys, to have

a better understanding of whether they are actually meeting their goals, whether the audience they are trying to meet is actually getting the message. Some of that is a resource issue. Some of it is because, as I mentioned earlier, they are trying to manage many other broadcast operations, it is a challenge for them to try to come up with an efficient approach to optimize their resources. So those kinds of issues are the ones where they generally agree that they need to do that, but the process of them implementing those things is taking some time.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you.

I want to thank each of the panelists. You have been very patient with your time, and I look forward to revisiting this issue as Alhurra and the BBG continue their mission.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:54 p.m., the subcommittee adjourned, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]

