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**Highlights**

Highlights of [GAO-08-764](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives

**Why GAO Did This Study**

The United States has long provided the Cuban people with alternative sources of news and information. As part of this effort, in December 2006 the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) awarded sole-source contracts to two Miami radio and television stations—Radio Mambi and TV Azteca—to provide additional broadcasting options. Additionally, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) annually awards millions of dollars in contracts for talent services—writers, reporters, and technical support—needed to produce and broadcast news and entertainment programming.

GAO evaluated the processes used to award (1) the Radio Mambi and TV Azteca broadcasting contracts, and (2) talent services contracts. We reviewed contract files and other documentation and interviewed program managers and contracting officers to determine the process used to award the two broadcasting contracts and a nongeneralizable selection of 37 talent services contracts.

**What GAO Recommends**

GAO recommends that the Broadcasting Board of Governors reinforce existing policy and guidance to plan for and employ appropriate competitive approaches, adequately document key decisions, ensure the timely involvement of stakeholders, and improve the clarity and usefulness of IBB’s guidance. While it did not formally comment on the recommendations, BBG indicated it is taking steps to implement them.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-764](#). For more information, contact John Hutton at (202) 512-4841 or [huttonj@gao.gov](mailto:huttonj@gao.gov).

**BROADCASTING TO CUBA**

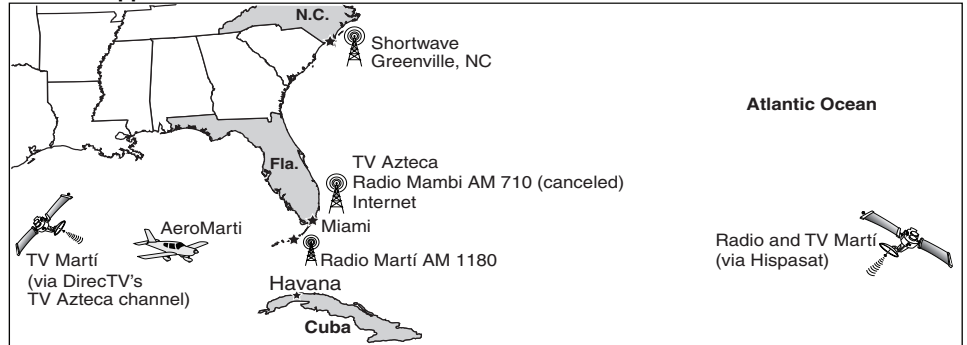
**Weaknesses in Contracting Practices Reduced Visibility into Selected Award Decisions**

**What GAO Found**

IBB’s approach for awarding the Radio Mambi and TV Azteca contracts did not reflect sound business practices. According to officials from IBB and the Broadcasting Board of Governors—IBB’s and OCB’s parent organization—the confluence of several interrelated events—ongoing interagency deliberations, the issuance of a July 2006 report by a Cabinet-level commission, and concerns about the health of Fidel Castro—required them to quickly obtain additional broadcasting services to Cuba. Competition laws and regulations provide agencies considerable flexibility to use noncompetitive procedures, if adequately justified, to meet their needs. In certain respects, however, IBB did not fully document in its contract files key information or assumptions underlying its decisions to not seek competitive offers, limit the number of potential providers it considered, or the basis used to negotiate the final prices for the services provided. Additionally, IBB did not actively involve its contracting office until just prior to contract award, though agency regulations and our prior work identify that timely involvement by stakeholders helps promote successful acquisition outcomes. Finally, though it partly justified its awards based on urgency, IBB exercised multiple options on the two contracts to extend their period of performance into 2008. Only recently has it taken steps to identify additional providers.

OCB’s practices for soliciting, evaluating, and selecting its talent contractors provide limited visibility at key steps. OCB issues quarterly announcements in *Federal Business Opportunities*, advertises annually in a local newspaper, and posts announcements at OCB’s headquarters. OCB does not require, however, that managers document instances in which resumes were received from sources outside these processes, such as when a contractor is recommended by an OCB employee. Further, OCB does not document why other potential providers were not selected as required by IBB’s guidance, in part due to questions about how to meet this requirement. Lastly, OCB managers use an IBB handbook to justify how much it pays for talent services, but the usefulness of the handbook’s pricing guidance may be limited as the recommended rates are not current or based on the local market.

**Selected Approaches Used to Broadcast to Cuba**



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