

The Broadcasting Board of Governors is an independent federal agency supervising all US government-funded civilian international broadcasting whose mission is:

To promote freedom and democracy and to enhance understanding through multimedia communication of accurate, objective and balanced news, information and other programming about America and the

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BBG HIGHLIGHTS

Strategic Goals, Challenges, and Accomplishments Around the BBG

June/July 2009



Left: The Persian News Network's Twitter account now boasts over 5,000 followers.

Right: Radio Farda's Golnaz Esfandiari appears on the Fox News program *Fox and Friends* to discuss ongoing events in Iran.



BBG Persian Broadcasters Report Iran's Post-Election Crisis

Citizen reporting and anticensorship techniques help BBG broadcasters get information to Iranian citizens and the outside world

"By all indications, this election is different from the previous ones," Setareh Derakhshesh, anchor of the VOA Persian News Network's *News and Views*, said days before Iran's June 12 election. "There are a lot of firsts - the intensity of the campaign, the reliance on technology and the debates among candidates."

As protests erupted in the streets, Iran began cracking down on media and upping its censorship and jamming. At the same time, photos and videos of the protests began flooding out of Iran over the Internet. In this unusual media environment, VOA's Persian News Network (PNN) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Radio Farda emerged as key sources of information for those inside Iran and observers worldwide.

"Me and my family need your broadcasts to find out what is going on in our country. It is very important and we do not know what is going on without you." – Phone call received by VOA's Persian News Network

broadcasters provided a clear window onto what was happening on the ground..

"How many more can they kill?"
- Message received by RFE/RL's Radio Farda (via *The National Review Online*)

"The only radio talking about protest 24 hours a day is Radio Farda," noted an e-mail sent to Radio Farda. Navid from Iran told PNN, "VOA is undoubtedly the most viewed news program in Iran right now. But the government is trying to jam the signals every day."

Ramped up radio and television signals and increased availability of web censorship circumvention software are helping combat the increased Iranian government jamming. To counter interference with satellite uplink and downlink signals, PNN TV programs are now beamed through five satellites with six different distribution channels. Our engineers increased shortwave transmissions of Radio Farda to 10 simultaneous channels at peak listening times.

Use of proxy servers, which provided a means for audiences to get around web censorship, tripled in the days following the election. Visits to the PNN and Radio Farda Web sites jumped up more than 400% compared to the start of the month.

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Parsing the masses of information emerging online and floods of comments and observations from their audience, these

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Threats to Journalists

On July 8, a group of masked men attacked the home of VOA Deewa Radio stringer Rahman Bunairee in Bunir, Pakistan, destroying a computer, boxes and valuables before blowing up the house.

The intruders claimed they were ordered to destroy the house because Bunairee works for Deewa Radio.

Transmission Updates

China's Guangdong Cruise Ship TV Channel (GCSTV), which reaches over 4 million cable subscribers, began airing VOA Mandarin's weekly *Cultural Odyssey* show. Previously, the Chinese government did not allow stations to air branded VOA programming, making this a noteworthy breakthrough.

Radio Kocaeli FM 97.3, located in a vibrant industrial province in northwest Turkey, has begun airing two VOA Turkish shows. The station's director says he grew up listening to VOA and expressed confidence in VOA's unbiased, trustworthy news.

VOA Tibetan is using Facebook to promote and distribute its radio programs. From the VOA Tibetan Facebook page listeners can hear radio show segments, post comments, and listen to Tibetan music.

Radio Kontinent in Chelyabinsk began broadcasting 24 hours of RFE/RL Russian on May 1.

Other new affiliations include DBT-TV in Cameroon, which will carry VOA English to Africa programs, and Sirihong Cable TV in Sangkhlaburi, a Thai-Myanmar border district, which broadcasts a daily VOA Burmese TV program.

VOA added a one-hour morning news program to cover the election aftermath. RFE/RL extended its evening and midnight news magazine shows from 30 to 90 minutes.

Preserving balance in reporting and including different views, BBG broadcasters have been a channel for the information coming out of Iran and back in. "Our broadcasters are simply reporting the news, increasingly by drawing upon the eye-witness accounts of Iranians themselves," said BBG Governor D. Jeffrey Hirschberg.

"I wanted to talk to a state TV official [and ask], why do you show the clip of a Basiji being beaten by the people but do not you show the millions of people who have been brutally beaten by batons, electric batons, and tear gas?" – Message to Radio Farda

Both broadcasters have had a flood of comments from their audience. PNN has at times received e-mails at rates of more than one per second. A new Twitter account attracted 4,500 followers within days of its launch.

VOA has also been receiving videos and pictures delivered to a YouSendIt address, designed to shield the identity of Iranians who participate. The videos provide on-the-spot accounts of events inside Iran.. RFE/RL posted a special [blog](#) to follow the election and aftermath and provides updates with photos, videos and comments from inside Iran.

The [New York Times](#) published the following account of the lengths Iranians have gone to

share their views, photos and videos of events as they unfold:

Shortly after Neda Agha-Soltan bled her life out on the Tehran pavement, the man whose 40-second video of her death has ricocheted around the world made a somber calculation in what has become the cat-and-mouse game of evading Iran's censors. He knew that the government had been blocking Web sites like YouTube and Facebook. Trying to send the video there could have exposed him and his family.

Instead, he e-mailed the two-megabyte video to a nearby friend, who quickly forwarded it to the Voice of America, the newspaper The Guardian in London and five online friends in Europe, with a message that read, "Please let the world know." [June 23]

Many other news organizations have singled out PNN and Radio Farda for the quality of their coverage and the response they've received from Iranians.

VOA has "taken the lead in providing information" in Iran's post-election crisis, according to the [Financial Times](#). A [Washington Post](#) article is headlined, "Persian News Network Finds New Life in Contested Iranian Election." RFE/RL's Radio Farda is "playing a pivotal role," according to a [Gulf News](#) article.

[CNN](#) highlighted the increase in web traffic and video submissions to PNN's Web site and the volume of videos being submitted, while [WUSA9](#) (a CBS affiliate in Washington, DC) discussed the success of VOA engineers in circumventing Iranian jamming and censorship.

NBC Nightly News and *ABC World Tonight* also featured PNN in their coverage. ■

Audiences Connect With BBG Broadcasters on President Obama's Cairo Speech

[Live translations, reaction polling highlight coverage of speech to Muslim world](#)

BBG broadcasters carried President Obama's June 4 speech on relations with the Muslim world live with simultaneous translation in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Pashto and Spanish. They used a wide range of technologies to cover the speech and engage their audiences, including: satellite TV, radio, streaming and on-demand video/audio; SMS messages; E-

mail; Facebook; Twitter; and YouTube.

A special VOA web page, [myvoa.com](#), compiled interviews with people throughout the Muslim world on their expectations and hopes.

Radio Farda, broadcasting in Persian, used SMS to gather reaction from its audience.

In advance of the President's visit to Cairo, Alhurra TV's 3-hour daily *Al Youm* program held an interactive segment asking viewers to share their expectations.

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Burke Award Winners Exemplify Courage, Integrity, Originality in Reporting at the BBG

Named for former BBG Chairman David Burke, the Burke Award recognizes courage, integrity and originality in reporting by journalists within the BBG broadcast organizations. This year's winners overcame significant obstacles, including physical dangers, to report news essential to audiences often deprived of information.

The winners are: Luis Ramirez of Voice of America (VOA); the Afghanistan-based correspondents of RFE/RL's Afghan Service; the radio news department of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB); Tseten Dolkar of the Tibetan Service of Radio Free Asia (RFA); and Serwa Abdel Wahed and Akram Alrubaiei of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks' Alhurra TV.

Read about their work at www.bbg.gov



Governor Blanquita Cullum presents Tseten Dolkar of RFA's Tibetan Service with her award.

To better report on reaction in the region, Alhurra commissioned an independent poll in Syria, Egypt, Morocco and Saudi Arabia by Maktoob Research. Results from the online poll showed that more than 75% had a favorable view of the speech.

The speech was covered in all 60 BBG languages and was translated and posted online by many language services that did not carry it live. ■

Authoritarianism's New Wave

RFE/RL, RFA, Freedom House report highlights new forms of government control

"Call it 'Authoritarianism 2.0,'" begins an article in *Foreign Policy* marking the release of an RFE/RL, RFA and Freedom House co-authored report on dictatorship in the 21st century. The report, "[Undermining Democracy: 21st century authoritarianism.](#)"



A dedicated website highlights the report's findings.

details the new and shrewd ways that authoritarian regimes are exerting control over their people and influence over other countries.

Examining China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Venezuela, the report notes that authoritarian regimes no longer seek absolute control over economic activity or information. Instead, they use more subtle methods to "manage" discourse and opinion. China in particular has been successful in commercializing censorship – encouraging journalists to produce reports that have public appeal but are politically non-inflammatory and deploying the "fifty cent army" to disrupt online debate.

The report documents how these countries undermine international efforts to promote good governance through no-strings attached foreign aid and investment. In addition, these countries are disrupting key international rules-based bodies that support democratic and human rights, and Venezuela, Russia and China in particular have created international organizations to rival the existing global order.

According to the report, it is more difficult to deal with these new forms of authoritarianism than with their predecessors. These countries are integrated into the world economy and participating in many of the world's established financial and political institutions, and their goals and methods are less clear. The report concludes that democracies must safeguard and promote an international system grounded in law and human rights. ■

Briefs

New Programming

VOA's Pashto-language Deewa Radio has expanded from six to nine hours daily. The new program block focuses on news and current affairs, with reports from a network of more than 20 local freelance journalists, and a topical call-in show featuring a wide variety of issues affecting those in the targeted region.

Martinoticias.com, the Web site of Radio and TV Marti, added new sections featuring in-depth analysis of the top Cuba or international news of the day and highlighting the work of Cuban bloggers such as youth-oriented *Arroz con Punk* (Rice and Punk).

Press Clips

RFE/RL President Jeffrey Gedmin published an op-ed in the [Washington Post](#) discussing the mood of Iranians and the role of RFE/RL. Radio Farda's Golnaz Esfandiari has appeared on [Fox News](#) and [SkyNews](#), among other programs.

BBG broadcasters "maintain a consistent, steady presence, outwitting the censors and keeping brave reporters on the ground," according to a June 28 op-ed in the [Boston Globe](#) on media and technology in Iran's protests.

Jeffrey Gedmin, RFA President Libby Liu, and Freedom House's Jennifer Windsor wrote a [Foreign Policy](#) article about their report, "Undermining Democracy." The report was covered by [Reuters](#), [the Economist](#), and the [Wall Street Journal](#).

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Aurangzaib Khan, *Internews'* Pakistan-based Manager of Media Development, said more Pakistanis in the border regions listen to VOA than to government broadcaster PBC in a June 1 interview posted to [Relief Web](#).

"China's censorship is multipronged, sometimes heavy-handed and sometimes sophisticated," according to RFA Executive Editor Dan Southerland, in a June 2 opinion piece in the [Washington Post](#) describing his experience in China during the Tiananmen crisis.

The story of RFA Cambodian reporter Piseth Lem, forced to flee Cambodia as a result of his reporting, was highlighted in the [Pacific Daily News](#).

The [Wilmington News Journal](#) recounted Alhurra reporter Rana Abtar's remarks to a meeting of People to People International. "My challenge is to show the Arab world and the Middle East how great your system is," Abtar told the group.

Al Youm Executive Producer Fran Mires and BBG Governor Joaquin Blaya spoke with [Digital Production Middle East](#) about the new program. "The technology has given us the vehicle to connect the Middle East," said Mires.

Implementation Strategies at Work

From the BBG 2008-2013 Strategic Plan

Build on BBG Reach and Impact Within the Muslim World

MBN Covers Kuwaiti, Lebanese Elections

Alhurra and Radio Sawa had extensive coverage of Kuwait's May elections, including the groundbreaking election of four women to Kuwait's parliament – a first for the country. Alhurra's coverage of elections in Lebanon was described as exceptional by Assafir newspaper.

VOA Urdu Helps Rescue Stranded Refugees

During a VOA Urdu program, several listeners called in to report that 100 people who had fled Swat Valley fighting were trapped in nearby mountains. The show host relayed this information to a general he interviewed. An army spokesman told VOA the stranded people were rescued less than 24 hours later.

RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan Launches Election Coverage

Starting in June Radio Free Afghanistan is dedicating 10 minutes of each hour of broadcasting to election reports. It will also interview each of the 41 candidates for the presidency and has invited all of them to participate in live roundtables where listeners can call in and ask them questions.

Help Audiences in Authoritarian Countries Understand the Principles and Practices of Democratic, Free and Just Societies

RFA Broadcasts Rare Zhao Ziyang Recording

As part of its coverage of the 20th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, RFA Mandarin aired a rare recording of Zhao Ziyang, then-Secretary General of the Communist party, in which he condemned the killing in Tiananmen Square and called for parliamentary democracy.

Employ Modern Communications Techniques and Technologies

Indonesians Use SMS to Reach VOA

Audiences in Indonesia can now communicate with VOA through SMS messages on their cell phones. By dialing a short code and entering the keyword VOA, audiences can send in comments, questions, requests, and more.

Facilitate Citizen Discourse

RFE/RL Kazakh Reports on Banned Book

RFE/RL Kazakh provided in-depth coverage of a controversial book published by President Nazarbayev's former son-in-law, which accuses the president of being an autocrat. The government has threatened to prosecute anyone possessing the book and domestic media have largely avoided the story.

Radio/TV Marti Cover Debate on Cuba's Readmission to OAS

Radio and TV Marti reported on the debate over Cuba's readmission to the Organization of American States. Coverage included statements from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Latin American leaders, members of Congress, dissidents, and Cuba experts.

Develop and Motivate the Workforce to Meet the Changing Conditions of U.S. International Broadcasting



Governor Simmons (2nd from right) speaks to PNN.

Governor Simmons Visits VOA's PNN and Deewa Radio

Governor Steven Simmons visited the Cohen Building to meet with staff of VOA's Persian News Network and Deewa Radio, taking questions and thanking the teams for their hard work covering ongoing crises..

Broaden Cooperation Within Public Diplomacy

VOA Conducts Exclusive Interview with New Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy

Judith McHale, the new Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs did a TV interview with VOA on her first full day. McHale said living in apartheid-era South Africa, where her father was a U.S. diplomat, helped spark her interest in human rights.