

The Broadcasting Board of Governors is an independent federal agency supervising all US government-funded non-military 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 world to audiences overseas.**

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# BBG HIGHLIGHTS

Strategic Goals, Challenges, and Accomplishments Around the BBG

April 2009

*Note: This monthly newsletter highlights selected Implementation Strategies of the BBG Strategic Plan, new programming and transmission initiatives, market trends, successes, best practices and other items of interest in fulfilling our mission.*



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton addresses employees at RFE/RL during her April 4 visit to its headquarters. During her visit, she toured the facilities and did an interview on Radio Free Afghanistan.

## Clinton Visits RFE/RL for Tour and Meeting With Staff

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton visited the new RFE/RL headquarters in Prague on April 4 to tour the new facilities and meet with employees.

During her visit, Clinton spoke to employees, saying "It is absolutely true what Jeff [Gedmin] said that this is smart power, but smart power takes smart people, people who are dedicated, who understand the mission of communication and free expression and reaching out to the rest of the world."

Clinton congratulated the staff for for having "dramatically increased your audiences," and remaining "competitive in a rapidly changing media environment."

While at RFE/RL, Clinton did an interview on Radio Free Afghanistan, and commented on its reach: "About half of the country's adult population tunes in to the bilingual Dari and Pashto broadcast on a weekly basis," she said. "It is considered a reliable outlet for information by the people of Afghanistan as all of your services are that are going into the various countries and telling the story of, you know, what the United States stands for as well."

Clinton also praised the many RFE/RL employees



Secretary Clinton's visit was covered extensively by RFE/RL journalists.

who have faced harassment, intimidation, kidnapping, arrests and violence.

"Your steadfast commitment to your mission is a great message about the importance of this work," she said. "I am a big believer in smart power and in communications. We have a big job to do to reach out to get accurate information into the countries and societies that we are currently addressing, and we couldn't do it without you."

# Briefs

## Transmission Updates

•VOA now on 3 of 8 stations in Conakry, Guinea

Horizon FM in Conakry, Guinea started broadcasting VOA French to Africa programs on March 20 after VOA completed down linking equipment installation. Horizon airs four VOA F2A programs 6-days a week. VOA can now be heard on three out of eight radio stations in Conakry.

## Threats to Journalists

•Somali Islamist Militia Detains, Releases Somali Service Stringer

Somalia's al-Shaba Islamist militia detained a VOA Somali Service reporter while he was covering a news story on April 7 and released him after several hours.

Al-Shaba arrested Hassan Kaffi Qoyste in a town in the Lower Shabelle region while he was reporting on humanitarian needs saying Qoyste allegedly entered the town without first obtaining permission from them.

## New Programming

•English to Africa Provides Special Health Coverage

With the help of the Development Office and with funding from USAID, VOA's English to Africa sent three reporters to Africa to cover maternal and child health care issues. Each reporter is doing a five-part series for *Africa News Tonight*.

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## Implementation Strategies at Work

### Build on BBG Reach and Impact Within the Muslim World

**MBN Covers Algerian Elections**

Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa provided extensive reporting on the Algerian presidential election on April 9. Alhurra and Radio Sawa had live updates from Algeria and analysis from the Middle East and the United States. With wide-ranging coverage, Alhurra



An Algerian man votes during the country's April 9 presidential elections.

expanded its newscasts and broadcast a two-hour election results evening special. Alhurra profiled the candidates, examined topics influencing the voters'

decisions, and analyzed the recent decision to amend the Algerian constitution to allow current President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to run for a third term. Radio Sawa also broadcast special coverage with live reports from Algeria.

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

**OCB Highlights Growing Blogger Movement**

Radio Marti News broke the story of Cuban bloggers and artists calling for freedom of expression at the Tenth Edition of the Havana Art Fair on March 29. Blogger Reinaldo Escobar told Radio Marti that the event should not be seen as a gesture by the government but as a reflection of the audacity of a group of people claiming democratic reforms. Radio Marti interviewed blogger Yoani Sanchez of Generation Y and Claudia Codelo, author of the blog Octavo Circle.

**RFA, VOA Mark 50th Anniversary of Uprisings**

As part of its special coverage of the 50th anniversary of the failed Tibetan uprising against

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### Former Czech President Havel Chairs First RFE/RL Editorial Meeting At New HQ

On March 27, RFE/RL marked another milestone in its 60 year history: Former Czech President and human rights activist Vaclav Havel chaired the first editorial meeting in its new headquarters in Prague.

RFE/RL's more than 450 Prague-based employees are moving to the new facility in Hagibor, ten minutes from Prague's city center. The five-story, 236,000 square foot building features the latest broadcast infrastructure and multimedia technology and adheres to highest standards in energy-efficiency and security.

At the invitation of then President Vaclav Havel, RFE/RL moved from Munich to Prague in 1995 and was based in the former Czechoslovak parliament building for almost 15 years.



Former Czech President Vaclav Havel chaired RFE/RL's first editorial meeting at its new headquarters outside Prague.

The relocation to a new facility began in January 2009. In February, Radio Free Iraq was the first of RFE/RL's 18 language services to start broadcasting from its new studios.

The move will be completed in May, at which time the former RFE/RL headquarters will be turned over to the National Museum of the Czech Republic.



Tibetan protesters in Dharamsala, say they're ready to take the fight for Tibet into the future. (Photo - Maura Moynihan)

Chinese rule, VOA Tibetan broadcast live the Dalai Lama's speech in which he reiterated his appeal for Tibetan autonomy. The service also began airing a series of in-depth radio reports that examine China's policies over the past half-century. The series, which airs once a week over the next six months, includes personal recollections of those who witnessed the 1959 uprising in Lhasa. Robert Barnett, a Tibetan expert at Columbia University, who said in a National Public Radio interview that Tibetans living in the countryside "are exceptionally well-informed about Tibetan history and politics and world affairs because they were all tuning in to Voice of America."

RFA's Tibetan service started a series of special reports from India and Nepal, marking the anniversary and the fleeing to India by the Dalai Lama and tens of thousands of refugees.

RFA covered numerous protests, which occurred in the Kham area, mainly in Kanze Prefecture, Sichuan Province, and Qinghai Province, providing immediate and often exclusive coverage of the killing of a monk and the detention of others by Chinese police in after a farmers' boycott.

#### RFA Covers Plight of Muslim Villagers

The Cantonese service reported that villagers in a Muslim region of Sanya, Hainan province, staged a vigil to protect local Muslim tombs after several attempts by authorities to demolish them. Up to 2,000 villagers protested in late December when military



A Hui Muslim woman carrying bones of her ancestors from a destroyed tomb (RFA photo)

personnel were set to begin construction of a training base on the land where their ancestors have been buried since the Tang Dynasty 700 years ago. The military re-occupied the land in the middle of March, which triggered more protests from the villagers – the ethnic minority Hui people – and work was once more suspended. Hai Shaihao, deputy Party secretary of Huixin village, told RFA, "The tombs of our Muslim ancestors cannot be moved." A local Hui said, "Even the Japanese wouldn't have dug up the bones of the dead during their occupation of China."

#### Employ Modern Communication Techniques and Technologies

##### Indonesian Web site Features VOA Indonesian Radio News

The popular Indonesian Internet news site Inilah.com, which features streaming of VOA TV programs on a special Web site, has developed a new site for VOA Indonesian radio programming online. The site, radio.inilah.com, contains story headlines and links to individual VOA Indonesian radio news stories.

#### Facilitate Citizen Discourse

##### OCB Explores Changes in Cuban Government

The Cuban government recently announced major personnel changes in the government and the Communist Party including the replacement of Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and Vice President for economic affairs Carlos Lage. According to experts interviewed by Radio Marti, as one of the biggest government shakeups in recent years, the changes reflect a prevailing hard line approach under Raul Castro. Radio Marti reports included analysis from independent journalists and dissidents in the island as well as recognized experts in Cuban affairs as well as U.S. reaction.

##### RFE/RL Uncovers Election Irregularities in Azerbaijan

During the March 18 referendum on abolishing presidential term limits in Azerbaijan, RFE/RL journalists reported violations of election rules throughout the country. In one instance, RFE/RL obtained video of a woman in Baku who appears to be voting three times.

According to official preliminary results, 92.2 percent of voters approved the measure to allow Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev the opportunity to rule the oil-rich South Caucasus country for life. Azerbaijan now joins Belarus as the only other European country to scrap term limits for its chief executive.

Several months before the referendum, the Azeri government banned RFE/RL, VOA and other foreign broadcasters from the FM airwaves.

##### VOA Covers NATO Induction of Albania and Croatia

VOA's Albanian and Croatian services provided live coverage of the induction of Albania and Croatia as full members of NATO on April 1. Welcoming them at the NATO summit in Strasbourg-Kehl, President

## Briefs

### •VOA Launches New Web Products

VOA developed and launched *Take Five*, an innovative short Web TV program that looks at five stories in five minutes or less and then points the way to the in-depth version of those stories available on VOANews.com. This new product is paired with *Now You Know*, a program designed to attract young people.

### •Kenyans Download VOA Audio/Video Through Safaricom

In a unique arrangement with Safaricom, a leading telecommunications company in Kenya, VOA now provides daily audio and video stories to cell phone subscribers. The Nairobi-based Safaricom estimates there were 800,000 attempted downloads of VOA reports between December 2008 and March 2009. Many downloads tracked with VOA's comprehensive coverage of the inauguration of President Obama. Safaricom has about 10 million subscribers in Kenya, with many concentrated in the major cities such as Nairobi and Mombasa.

### •VOA Khmer Launches New TV Segment in Cambodia

On March 30, VOA Khmer began airing a new television program across Cambodia on National Television Kampuchea (TVK), one of the country's top two national television stations. Airing five days a week, *VOA Khmer Discovering* includes stories on issues such as health, science, travel, and life in America. The first segment included features on jobs in the United States and space exploration.

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# Briefs

## Press Clips

•On March 31, the Associated Press picked up an RFA story about a Tibetan monk who was beaten to death by police in southwestern China after urging Tibetans to boycott farming to protest a massive security clampdown

•The *New York Times* published a letter on April 6 from VOA Director Dan Austin, describing VOA broadcasts to Pashto speakers in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region with its highly successful Deewa Radio broadcast.

•Aslan Doukaev, Director of RFE/RL's North Caucasus service, was quoted extensively in an article for the April 20 edition of *Time* magazine on Russia's declaration that its "counterterrorism operation" in Chechnya is officially over.

•On April 20, AFP picked up an Alhurra interview with Somali Minister for Planning and International Cooperation Abdirahman Abdishakuur regarding how to deal with piracy off the country's coasts.

•On April 21, The *Christian Science Monitor* quoted VOA reporting in a story the newspaper did on the Somali pirate that was brought to the U.S. to face charges over a recent incident involving a U.S. flagged merchant ship.



Albania's President Topi being interviewed live by VOA stringer Armand Mero in Strasbourg.

Obama praised both countries for "making extraordinary efforts at reform to see this day come about." The Albanian Service gained exclusive interviews with Albania's Foreign Minister Lulzim Basha and President Bamir Topi. President Topi thanked the United States for its support. He also thanked VOA "for being an important point of communication for the great challenge that Albania faced on its way to join NATO."

### Engage the World in a Conversation About America

#### VOA Covers Obama's New Strategy for Afghanistan, Pakistan

As part of VOA's comprehensive coverage of President Obama's new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, VOA Urdu radio broadcast the president's March 27 address live, followed by analysis and reaction, including man-on-the-street interviews in Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and Islamabad. VOA's Urdu Service also interviewed Richard Boucher, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs. In addition, VOA's Afghanistan [Dari and Pashto] Service covered the story on radio and television, and interviewed National Security Advisor James Jones about the administration's new strategy.

#### Alhurra Airs Interview with Turkish President

During an exclusive interview with Alhurra Television on April 8, Abdullah Gul, the President of Turkey, discussed the significance of President Obama's visit, the role of Turkey in Iraq and Afghanistan, Armenian-Turkish relations, as well as the impact of Turkey's growing role in the region.

#### VOA Provides Blanket Coverage of President Obama's First Overseas Trip

VOA's White House correspondent Paula Wolfson accompanied Mr. Obama on his first overseas trip as President, which included London, Prague, Ankara, Istanbul and an unscheduled stop in Baghdad. VOA's Persian News Network (PNN) also dispatched its State

Department correspondent to Strasbourg, France to cover NATO's 60th anniversary summit and President Obama's talks with world leaders. PNN was also on the ground in Turkey to cover President Obama's visit,, providing extensive coverage of his address to the Turkish parliament about U.S. relations with the Muslim world as well as his town hall meeting with Turkish students. The PNN team was on hand for the town hall meeting and interviewed participants for their reactions.

### Optimize Broadcasting Operations

#### VOA Launches New Home Page

VOANews.com revamped its home page to give news a more central role on the page. While the home page retains many of its current special features, including links to all of VOA's 45 language services, it improves navigation to the various features, allowing Web visitors to access VOA on different platforms. It also prominently displays links to interactive features, including podcasts, RSS feeds, mobile services, and links to the T2A Web chat. In addition, the new page makes it easier to visit VOA's pages on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, where 25 VOA language services have individual channels.

### Preserve Credibility and Ensure Overall Programming Excellence

#### Radio Sawa Wins Award

On April 25, the Pan Arab Web Awards Academy Jury Committee awarded the Radio Sawa first prize for excellence in its fifth annual competition of Pan Arab Web sites. RadioSawa.com won first place in the Media-TV and Radio category which recognizes excellence in Web design and development.

### Broaden Cooperation Within U.S. Public Diplomacy

#### McHale Nominated for Under Secretary Slot

On April 14, the White House announced the nomination of Judith A. McHale, for Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. McHale is a media and communications executive whose career has been devoted to building companies and non-profit organizations dedicated to connecting people around the world. She is the former President and Chief Executive Officer of Discovery Communications.