

UNCLASSIFIED



Office of Inspector General
United States Department of State

ISP-IB-21-06

Office of Inspections

December 2020

Targeted Inspection of the U.S. Agency for Global Media: Journalistic Standards and Principles

U.S. AGENCY FOR GLOBAL MEDIA

UNCLASSIFIED

Summary of Review

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted the fieldwork for this targeted inspection from April 30 to June 5, 2020,¹ to assess how the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) and its five broadcasting entities² complied with the statutory requirements of the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994 that relate to journalistic professionalism, independence, and integrity. OIG focused its review on two core questions:

- Does USAGM and its five networks have in place effective policies and internal controls governing journalistic standards and ethics consistent with the requirements in the 1994 Act, including sufficient policies and procedures to monitor and address real or alleged content inaccuracies, bias, and ethics violations?
- Does USAGM and its five networks have established effective communication, training, and employee workplace practices and policies to ensure awareness of, and compliance with, journalistic standards and ethical principles?

The 1994 Act bars OIG from evaluating the philosophical or political perspectives of broadcasting content.³ Therefore, OIG did not assess network journalistic content. In addition, due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, OIG used Internet-based communication applications to conduct interviews and observe meetings.⁴

With respect to the first question, OIG found USAGM and its five networks developed guidance documents that turned the broad standards and principles of the 1994 Act into detailed, codified journalistic practices and ethical behaviors that could be communicated, trained, monitored, and enforced. All five networks conducted standards-guided reviews of journalistic content at multiple levels, from the basic daily editorial workflow to annual program reviews and spot content checks. Most network content received at least two levels of editorial oversight before being published or broadcast. USAGM's former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) strengthened USAGM oversight of standards at the networks through more consistent and well-documented processes for annual program reviews of network content quality. However, OIG found that the Voice of America (VOA) only conducted program reviews for approximately half of its language services.

OIG found that prior to March 2020, USAGM lacked uniform policies and procedures across the five networks to improve its response to violations of journalistic standards. USAGM's action to strengthen oversight was prompted by a violation of editorial standards at the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) in 2018. After commissioning an external review, USAGM

¹ OIG concluded its fieldwork for the inspection prior to the tenure of CEO Michael Pack, who assumed his duties on June 9, 2020.

² The five entities are Voice of America, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks.

³ Section 6209a(b), Respect for journalistic integrity of broadcasters: "The Inspector General of the Department of State and the Foreign Service shall respect the journalistic integrity of all the broadcasters covered by this chapter and may not evaluate the philosophical or political perspectives reflected in the content of broadcasts."

⁴ See Appendix A for details of OIG's objectives, scope, and methodology for this inspection.

pressed reforms on OCB to improve journalistic standards. Those reforms were progressing but needed to be better communicated to the staff.

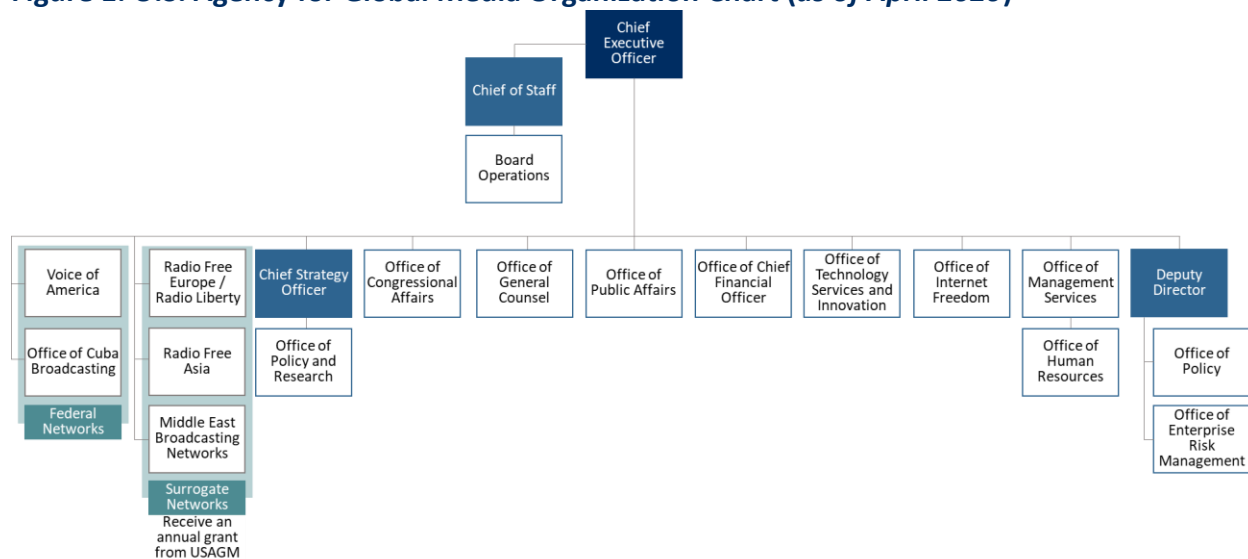
With respect to the second question, OIG found that USAGM and network leadership generally modeled journalistic standards and independence; they communicated the importance of such standards and independence and took their protection seriously. All networks except OCB clearly communicated the standards used to guide their journalistic work both internally and to the public. All networks conducted some training on journalistic standards and ethical conduct, but mostly on an ad hoc basis. The lack of professional development training plans made the initiatives more incident-driven than systematic.

This report includes four recommendations to improve USAGM and network adherence to journalistic standards and principles. USAGM concurred with all four recommendations,⁵ and OIG considers the recommendations resolved (see Recommendations section of this report).

BACKGROUND

USAGM, known prior to September 22, 2018, as the Broadcasting Board of Governors, is an independent Federal agency authorized by the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994 (the 1994 Act) to direct and supervise U.S. Government-funded civilian international broadcasting. USAGM oversees two Federal broadcast entities—VOA and OCB—and three private, nonprofit broadcast entities—Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA), and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN). The three non-Federal networks receive their funding through grants issued and managed by USAGM. Together, the five broadcasting networks deliver program content in 61 languages to more than 100 countries using a range of broadcast and digital platforms.

⁵ USAGM did not provide formal written comments on this report. OIG's guidance to USAGM, when it was sent the draft report for review and comment, stated that if formal written comments are not submitted, OIG will conclude that the agency concurs with the recommendations. Although formal written comments were not submitted by USAGM, it did provide technical comments from three of the broadcast networks—VOA, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks. OIG took these technical comments into consideration as it prepared the final report for publication.

Figure 1: U.S. Agency for Global Media Organization Chart (as of April 2020)

Source: U.S. Agency for Global Media

USAGM's overall mission is to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. Within that broad mission, however, the five broadcast entities have distinct mandates. VOA's mission is to represent the United States, its people, and its policies, and to be a reliable and authoritative source of news. OCB, RFE/RL, and RFA have a more sharply focused primary mission: to serve as surrogate news sources in their respective regions and provide an example of free press and accurate and timely media reporting in countries where such sources of news are unavailable or limited. MBN serves as a hybrid of the two missions, by presenting accurate and objective news and information about the United States, the Middle East, and North Africa.

The combination of Federal and non-Federal entities with differing legal authorities and organizational structures resulted from a series of Congressional and executive actions dating from 1942 (see Appendix B for historical chronology). The 1994 Act consolidated all U.S. Government nonmilitary, international broadcasting under the oversight of a single agency, the present-day USAGM. An amendment in 2017 codified the agency's oversight responsibilities under a CEO supported by the International Broadcasting Advisory Board.⁶ (Appendix C

⁶ On June 9, 2020, Michael Pack was sworn in as CEO of USAGM following his confirmation by the U.S. Senate on June 4. OIG already had completed its inspection work at that time; therefore, this report covers USAGM practices with respect to journalistic standards and principles prior to Mr. Pack's tenure. At the time of the inspection, the CEO position was filled on an acting basis by USAGM's Chief Financial Officer. The previous CEO, who had served since 2015, resigned in September 2019. In addition, three of the nine holdover USAGM Board positions were vacant at the time of the inspection. Under the 1994 Act as amended in 2016 (see Section 1288 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2017, P.L. 114-328, enacted December 23, 2016), a new Advisory Board, also appointed by the President but no longer required to be confirmed by the Senate, was to be constituted after a new CEO was confirmed. Mr. Pack's confirmation triggered that process. The amended law calls for the new Advisory Board, which had not yet been constituted at the conclusion of OIG's fieldwork for this inspection, to be reduced in size to five members, with four members selected from a bipartisan slate proposed by Congress and the

summarizes the statutory responsibilities and authorities of the USAGM CEO and Advisory Board.)

Agency's Founding Legislation Outlines Core Journalistic Standards and Principles

The 1994 Act states that U.S. Government-funded international broadcasting shall comply with 8 broadcasting standards and 10 broadcasting principles.⁷ Among these, U.S. international broadcasting “shall be consistent with the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States” and “conducted in accordance with the highest professional standards of broadcast journalism.”⁸ Additionally, broadcasting “shall include news, which is consistently reliable and authoritative, accurate, objective, and comprehensive; and a balanced and comprehensive projection of United States thought and institutions, reflecting the diversity of United States culture and society.”⁹ Under the law, the USAGM CEO is responsible for ensuring that U.S. international broadcasting is conducted in accordance with these standards and principles. The law makes clear, however, that the oversight must always “respect the professional independence and integrity” of network journalistic content, a protection against potential political interference commonly referred to by the broadcasting entities as “the firewall.”¹⁰ (Appendix D contains the full language on broadcasting standards and principles from the 1994 Act and the VOA charter.)

JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS: INTERNAL CONTROL POLICIES AND PROCESSES

OIG reviewed the internal control policies and processes established by USAGM and the five networks to govern and monitor compliance with journalistic standards. Each network had guidance documents keyed to these standards and relied on three primary processes to monitor compliance: (1) daily editorial oversight of content on all media platforms; (2) procedures used to address possible violations of journalistic standards; and (3) annual program review and spot content review mechanisms designed to monitor editorial quality and mitigate or investigate violations of standards. OIG found that these three internal control processes generally were well-functioning at most networks, with the exceptions noted below. OIG also found that USAGM took steps to improve its protocols for responding to real or

Secretary of State as the fifth member. For background on USAGM's governance structure, see the OIG report *Targeted Inspection of the Governance of the U.S. Agency for Global Media* (ISP-IB-19-22, April 2019).

⁷ For the purposes of this report, the term “broadcasting” is understood to encompass all media content produced and transmitted by the networks, including on digital platforms.

⁸ United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994, 22 U.S.C. § 6202(a)(5).

⁹ 22 U.S.C. § 6202(b)(1) and (2).

¹⁰ See National Defense Authorization Act, Section 6204(b): “The Secretary of State and the Chief Executive Officer, in carrying out their functions, shall respect the professional independence and integrity” of its broadcasting services and grantees. On June 4, 2020, a day before its dissolution upon the confirmation of the new CEO, the outgoing USAGM Board approved a new Federal Rule that aims to provide fuller definition and clarification of the firewall provision. See 85 Federal Register 36150-36153/22 Code of Federal Regulations 531, published on June 11, 2020.

alleged editorial lapses and had strengthened the annual program review process by establishing uniform baseline standards, as discussed below.

Agency and its Networks Developed Written Journalistic Standards

OIG found that all five USAGM networks developed written guidance that codified the broad standards and principles of the 1994 Act into detailed journalistic practices and ethical behaviors that could be communicated, trained, monitored, and enforced. These standards parallel those promoted by professional journalist organizations, taught at schools of journalism, and practiced by major U.S. media companies. Examples of journalistic tradecraft standards include using identified, authoritative sources and double-sourcing stories for accuracy; avoiding stereotypes and slurs; denying terrorist or extremist groups a platform to promote violence; including opposing voices to provide fairness while avoiding false balance not supported by fact; and clearly delineating commentary and opinion from straight news coverage. Additionally, the five networks developed written ethics standards that prohibited plagiarism and copyright violations; staging or recreating events; giving and accepting payments; and avoiding actual or apparent conflict of interest through outside activities, including political activism.¹¹ The grant agreements between USAGM and all three non-Federal networks required the grantee networks to adhere to the journalistic standards and principles of the 1994 Act.¹² All five networks had disciplinary policies to address violations of journalistic standards and related ethical conduct.

Networks Saw Adherence to Journalistic Standards as Essential to Counter Perceptions of Bias

Leaders and employees from all five networks told OIG that they believed their status as Government-funded organizations created even greater pressure to uphold journalistic standards in order to gain credibility with their audiences as objective and independent news

¹¹ VOA's standards are described in The Journalistic Code and its Best Practices Guide. VOA regularly updated this 112-page guide in response to new situations and technologies. As Federal employees, VOA journalists also are required to follow U.S. Office of Government Ethics policies and other requirements found in USAGM's Broadcasting Administrative Manual. These addressed issues such as annual financial disclosure requirements, nepotism, and other Federal employee regulations. OCB, according to its establishing legislation as a Federal entity under VOA, also is bound by Broadcasting Administrative Manual requirements and VOA standards. All three non-Federal networks also published policies to address journalistic tradecraft and ethical behaviors as part of their employee handbooks. In addition, the requirement for each grantee network to adhere to the journalistic standards and principles of the 1994 Act were written into the grant agreements between USAGM and each network. RFE/RL's "Principles of Ethical Journalism," RFA's "Code of Journalistic Ethics," and MBN's "Journalistic Code of Ethics," with their associated policy links, contained detailed guidance on standards, and addressed ethical issues such as plagiarism, nepotism, and conflict of interest.

¹² The USAGM grant awards to RFA, RFE/RL, and MBN serve as performance agreements between USAGM and the non-Federal networks. In exchange for Federal funds to conduct international broadcasting, the grantees agree to a list of performance and reporting requirements, among which are adherence to the 1994 Act's broadcast standards and principles. Amendments to the FY 2020 grants include information about the role USAGM's Office of Policy and Research plays in monitoring compliance with the grant, including conducting spot checks and program reviews as requested by the CEO, Board, and USAGM entities. The grant language also states that USAGM acknowledges and affirms the safeguards contained in the 1994 Act meant to preserve the journalistic independence and integrity of USAGM programming and prevent actions that may undermine the journalistic credibility or independence of USAGM or its broadcasters.

sources rather than outlets for state-sponsored propaganda. USAGM and network leadership said they viewed the statutory language on standards and “the firewall” (described above) as an effort by Congress to safeguard U.S. international broadcasting from being used to promote any administration’s policy objectives through tailored information that might be misleading, biased, incomplete, or inaccurate. Additionally, network leadership said their status as publicly funded networks made them targets for pressure from interest groups both inside and outside the United States wanting their own political agendas reflected in network content. Such interest groups cite their own policy priorities or perceived moral imperatives for why coverage in certain language services should reflect particular points of view. Network heads told OIG that the long-term success of their mission required resisting such pressures and maintaining standards of balance and objectivity.

Leaders at both the Federal and non-Federal networks told OIG that USAGM leadership at the time of the inspection respected their independence. However, some staff members commented that it was important for USAGM leadership to remain politically neutral in exercising content review oversight or addressing perceived journalistic lapses to ensure network independence and avoid firewall violations.¹³

Daily Editorial Oversight

Networks Generally Ensured Adherence to Standards Through Daily Editorial Oversight

OIG reviewed the daily editorial workflow procedures at each network and found most network content received at least two levels of editorial oversight before being published or broadcast. For example, a VOA reporter’s content was typically reviewed by at least a language service or central news desk editor as well as a copy editor; RFE/RL content was usually cleared by at least one managing editor as well as a digital editor. Most of the monitoring and mitigation policies and procedures to protect against content inaccuracies and bias were part of these daily editorial oversight workflow procedures.

Networks Added Editorial Positions to Strengthen Standards and Promote Best Practices

At the time of the inspection, four of the five networks had Standards Editors to strengthen attention to journalistic standards and ethics; three of the networks had added the position during the past 3 years. This position often is found in large news organizations to advise reporters and editors on standards, ethics, style, and language usage questions based on professional best practices and organizational mission. In 2010, VOA established the first USAGM network Standards Editor position, responsible for creating and updating VOA’s Best Practices Guide, conducting training in journalistic standards and best practices, serving as a reference for internal questions, responding to public comments VOA received through its internet comment portal, and assisting with spot content reviews. In 2017, RFE/RL became the second network to hire a Standards Editor. MBN followed suit in 2019, calling its position

¹³ These concerns about the enhanced authorities of the USAGM CEO position under the 1994 Act, as amended in 2016, posing a possible risk to firewall protections also were discussed in an earlier OIG report. See *Targeted Inspection of the Governance of the U.S. Agency for Global Media* (ISP-IB-19-22, April 2019), page 5.

“Public Editor,” but with a similar portfolio. At the time of the inspection, OCB was in the process of filling a newly created Standards Editor position as part of its effort to strengthen editorial oversight, as discussed later in this report. RFA opted to cover these functions with its existing editorial staff rather than create a new position. However, OIG found a lack of communication among the existing network standards editors. USAGM and the network heads agreed with OIG’s suggestion to establish a cross-network channel of communication among these editors as a useful way to share information, best practices, and lessons learned.

Networks Sought to Address the Editorial Oversight Challenges of Social Media

Three of the five networks had recently added levels of oversight to strengthen editorial oversight of round-the-clock digital platforms. For example, MBN created a Vice President-level position for digital oversight in 2020. OCB created two new positions in 2020 that are focused on maintaining journalistic standards and ethics in the digital environment: a Chief Content Officer and a Director of Digital Strategy. RFE/RL was in the process of adding a Digital Strategy Officer during the inspection. It also extended the Standards Editor concept further into the organization by creating new managing editor positions for its largest language services, focusing on ensuring that digital news content adhered to network standards. As of May 2020, RFE/RL had hired seven Managing Editors and was recruiting eight more, with the goal of having this position in most of its language services.

All five networks also had internal policies to address employee behavior on both professional and personal social media platforms. The Broadcasting Administrative Manual’s Social Media Policy governed USAGM and the two Federally funded networks—VOA and OCB. MBN clearly articulated a social media policy in its employee handbook and considered it a part of its Journalistic Code of Ethics. RFA and RFE/RL maintained separate social media policies that applied to all employees, including journalists.

Procedures for Addressing Alleged Violations of Standards

Agency Lacked Formal Guidance on Response to Lapses in Journalistic Standards at Networks Prior to 2020

Prior to March 2020, USAGM lacked uniform policies and procedures across its five networks on how to respond to violations of journalistic standards. This occurred despite legislation that requires USAGM to notify its Congressional appropriations committees within 15 days of any determination that its broadcast entities violated the standards and principles set forth in the 1994 Act.¹⁴ Although all networks had clear policies for addressing verifiable, one-time inaccuracies of fact when they occurred, none had consistent guidelines governing how a

¹⁴ Further Consolidated Appropriations Act 2020, Pub. L. No. 116-94, December 20, 2019, 22 U.S. Code Annotated (USCA) § 6203, states that USAGM shall notify the Committees on Appropriations within 15 days of any determination by the USAGM that any of its broadcast entities, including its grantee organizations, provides an open platform for international terrorists or those who support international terrorism, or is in violation of the principles and standards set forth in subsections (a) and (b) of section 6202 of the United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994 (22 U.S.C. § 6202) or the entity’s journalistic code of ethics.

network should manage its initial internal response to an alleged violation, when and how a network should supplement its internal review with outside experts, or when and how networks should notify USAGM.

The lack of standardized procedures for the networks to communicate and coordinate with USAGM regarding violations of journalistic standards inhibited USAGM's ability to ensure full compliance with the Congressional notification requirement. USAGM reported two violations to Congress in 2018 and three instances in 2019. Network staff also told OIG that USAGM communicated informally with congressional staff on additional violations. However, because of a lack of standardized procedures and record keeping,¹⁵ OIG was unable to determine whether all such incidents were reported to Congress in a timely manner, as required. OIG concluded that the lack of standardized procedures was caused, in part, by differing views within USAGM about the degree of oversight that it could carry out while respecting the journalistic independence of the networks, as also required by law.

Recognizing this procedural deficiency, USAGM worked with the networks on a mutually acceptable approach and in March 2020 issued written policy guidance¹⁶ to address violations of the principles, standards, or journalistic code of ethics. The guidance requires each network to develop and implement appropriate procedures to review and investigate potential violations and to determine whether a violation has occurred. It also establishes escalating requirements for when the network must notify USAGM of violations and when and how USAGM should take action based on frequency and severity. Although the decision on when to notify Congress about violations remains a policy determination by USAGM with no firm, established criteria, OIG concluded after reviewing the formal policy guidance that, if implemented as written, it would standardize and strengthen network and USAGM oversight processes consistent with requirements under the law. As a result, OIG did not make a recommendation in this area.

During OIG's review of USAGM's procedures used to address alleged violations of journalistic standards, OIG found two cases where earlier formal policy guidance on violations of the principles, standards, or journalistic code of ethics could have made a critical difference in resolving problems that had eluded resolution at the network level. USAGM leadership learned of problems at RFE/RL's Tajik Language Service and OCB's Radio/Television Marti only when they became public, even though the problems were known internally at the networks much earlier. Both scenarios are summarized below; OIG made a recommendation in the latter case.

¹⁵ OIG cited USAGM's lack of a formal system for task and document management as a deficiency in its April 2019 report *Targeted Inspection of the Governance of the United States Agency for Global Media* (ISP-IB-19-22), page 11.

¹⁶ USAGM's Advisory Board approved "USAGM Procedures for Violations of the Principles, Standards, or Journalistic Code of Ethics" at its March 12, 2020, meeting.

Agency Assisted Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Response to Long-Standing Concerns in Central Asia

In response to OIG hotline complaints that OIG referred to USAGM, in November 2015 the RFE/RL network began internal investigations into alleged editorial, conflict of interest, and morale problems at the Tajik Language Service. An initial RFE/RL review concluded that the Tajik Service director blocked stories critical of the Tajik Government or members of the president's family out of concern that the host government would close RFE/RL's Dushanbe bureau. Despite in-house counseling about upholding journalistic standards, the problems persisted until March 2019, after journalists from outside RFE/RL and other independent observers published articles and complained to the Department of State (Department) through the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe. At that point, the acting RFE/RL president, with support from USAGM's then-CEO, undertook an outside review of the Tajik Service, which resulted in the departure of several longtime staff members, including the Tajik Service Director, the Central Asia Regional Editor, and a senior editor in Prague. After being appointed in July 2019, the new RFE/RL president followed up with visits to the region, consulted USAGM's Senior Advisor on journalistic standards, increased training for Central Asian service staff, and contracted monthly spot content reviews of the regional language services to monitor improvement. Because USAGM and RFE/RL took significant steps to address this longstanding problem, OIG did not make a recommendation on this issue.

Following a Major Lapse in Journalistic Standards, Agency Pressed Reforms on the Office of Cuba Broadcasting

Controversial content aired by OCB's Radio Televisión Martí in 2018 prompted USAGM's then-CEO to take a more active role in oversight of journalistic standards. OCB aired what USAGM and other observers described as an unfounded and blatantly anti-Semitic video segment. When he learned of the situation (months later, and only after it was picked up as a story by national media), the then-CEO took several steps to improve journalistic standards and workflow practices at OCB and to strengthen USAGM's network oversight more broadly. Along with a human resources investigation that eventually led to separation proceedings for responsible OCB employees, USAGM commissioned internal and external reviews of OCB's editorial policies and oversight procedures. The resulting report,¹⁷ issued in May 2019, concluded that the video, radio, and web content of Radio Televisión Martí fell far short of journalistic standards and OCB's stated mission, noting that "well-established norms of objectivity in journalism are routinely disregarded." The report also found no consensus among staff about the network's core mission, with some seeing it as advocacy against the Cuban Government and others as supplying the Cuban people with independent, objective news. Drawing on the report's conclusions, USAGM recommended the following reforms for OCB:

¹⁷ The USAGM-commissioned external panel released a public report, "Embarking on Reform of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting," on May 21, 2019. USAGM asked a five-person expert panel to review Radio Televisión Martí's video, radio, and web content based on the standards of OCB's ethical guidelines, and to review its production quality. Two internal reports based on senior staff visits to OCB on November 27-28, 2018, and March 21-22, 2019, also informed USAGM's reform agenda for OCB.

- Update journalistic standards to reflect industry best practices, reinforced through comprehensive staff training.
- Establish clear, documented editorial processes across all platforms and programs.
- Establish annual program reviews to identify and correct any lapses in quality.
- Distinguish between news and commentary in programs and articles to make clear that opinions of commentators do not necessarily reflect the views of the network.
- Hire a Standards Editor to establish best-in-class editorial guidelines.

Reforms for the Office of Cuba Broadcasting Were Not Clearly Communicated to Staff

OIG found that OCB had begun to implement some of the reforms recommended by USAGM, but the overall reform strategy and timeline had not been clearly communicated to its staff. In September 2019, following the resignation of the OCB Director, the Deputy Director took over as acting director. He reinstated daily editorial meetings and appointed a new Central News Director to reinforce editorial standards. During the inspection, OCB was in the process of filling newly created positions for Standards Editor, Chief Content Officer, and Digital Media Director to provide additional oversight for editorial and journalistic processes. Despite these initiatives, OIG found staff members remained uncertain about the responsibilities of the new positions and how they would fit into the organizational structure. The Government Accountability Office has identified several key steps for successful change management at Federal agencies.¹⁸ These steps include leadership's responsibility to: establish a coherent mission and integrated strategic goals to guide the transformation; set implementation goals and a timeline to build momentum; and establish a communication strategy to create shared expectations and report progress. Without a clearly communicated reform strategy and timeline that includes annual program reviews (as discussed further below), the full package of mutually reinforcing reforms at OCB is less likely to gain staff buy-in and successful implementation.

Recommendation 1: The Office of Cuba Broadcasting, in coordination with the U.S. Agency for Global Media, should prepare and communicate with its staff a comprehensive plan for timely implementation of the editorial oversight reforms, including annual program reviews. (Action: OCB, in coordination with USAGM)

Annual Program and Spot Content Reviews

Although ongoing adherence to standards is monitored mainly through the daily editorial oversight processes described above, annual program reviews are the networks' principal systematic process for ensuring journalistic standards and quality in a consistent and documented way.¹⁹ As such, they serve as the principal mechanism by which the USAGM CEO

¹⁸ Government Accountability Office, *Results-Oriented Culture: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations* (GAO-03-669, July 2003).

¹⁹ OIG notes that there is another USAGM-coordinated annual review process called the Language Service Review. While the annual program reviews focus primarily on journalistic standards and program quality, the Language Service Review is designed to ensure that USAGM network language service offerings are appropriately aligned with U.S. foreign policy priorities. It also seeks to maximize efficiencies and avoid duplication of effort between and

fulfills the statutory requirement “to review and evaluate the mission and operation of and to assess the quality, effectiveness, and professional integrity” of all broadcasting activities, and to ensure that those activities are conducted in accordance with journalistic standards. As mentioned earlier, USAGM supplemented its annual program reviews by spot content reviews of specific topics. OIG found these processes, recently strengthened by USAGM, provided a generally effective means of monitoring the quality of journalistic content, except as noted below.

Agency Sought to Strengthen the Annual Program Review Process at the Networks

Prior to 2019, USAGM had no uniform standards or procedures for how networks should monitor and evaluate program content and report those findings to USAGM. Although all networks had processes in place for formal annual reviews of program quality, review methodology varied. Beginning in late 2018, as part of the actions resulting from the OCB situation described earlier, USAGM developed uniform baseline standards to guide the annual program reviews for each network language service. The agency issued them as formal policy in April 2019. By establishing these standards and reporting requirements, USAGM sought to comply with its statutory oversight responsibility while maintaining respect for the autonomy of each network over its content. Core common principles for annual program reviews are shown in Figure 2, below.

Figure 2: Annual Program Review Core Common Principles

Frequency: Each USAGM language service should be reviewed at least once per year.

Scope: Reviews should examine a diverse sample of content from a set time period.

Review Methodology: To ensure objectivity, reviews should be conducted by an office outside of the editorial chain of command. Ideally, reviews should draw from internal analysts, internal panels that include expertise from outside the language service, and external area specialists and/or media professionals.

Sharing Results: Results of the review should be presented to the service in person to facilitate robust discussion on follow up. Meetings should include service staff, leadership, and representatives of offices that support or coordinate with the services.

Evaluation Criteria: Each network should have a formal set of criteria against which programming is judged, to include journalistic standards of balance, objectivity, accuracy, and comprehensiveness.

Documentation: Results of the review should be summarized in a formal report that presents key findings and outlines how the review met each of the guidance elements noted above. The reports should be provided to the network head and USAGM.

among the different networks. The Language Service Review process meets USAGM’s statutory requirement to “review, evaluate, and determine, at least annually, after consultation with the Secretary of State, the addition or deletion of language services.”

Self-Assessment: The program review process should begin with a language service self-assessment, to be managed by the service chief with input from others, that highlights key accomplishments, challenges, and problems that need to be addressed.

Action Plans/Follow-Up: Each report should include an action plan that identifies steps needed to address issues identified, and the responsible offices and expected timeframes to complete those actions.

Source: *Expectations for Network Program Review*, USAGM Office of Policy and Research, April 2019.

OIG found that all five networks generally embraced the new uniform baseline standards, many of which were consistent with existing practices. Where network practices differed, the networks and USAGM sought to find acceptable options that met the intent of the standards. The agency also introduced some new practices. For example, in May 2020, each network head led a 1-hour executive-level readout session of annual program review findings with the acting USAGM CEO. This first-ever exchange afforded both network and USAGM leadership the opportunity to underscore their commitment to the importance of journalistic standards and an organizational culture of critical self-assessment. OIG found USAGM's effort to create more uniform baseline standards for network annual program reviews strengthened its oversight capability while leaving ongoing supervisory editorial responsibility at the network level.

Network Annual Program Review Processes Varied, But All Led to Program Improvements

Network staff consistently told OIG that the annual program reviews were useful and led to concrete program improvements. With the exception of OCB, the processes were run by in-house network research/evaluation units independent of the editorial chain of command.²⁰ The networks provided OIG with 2019 program reviews of multiple language services and programs that demonstrated objective methodology and included both positive and negative observations. Each review included an action plan with recommendations and identified specific areas for improvement.

OIG found that RFE/RL and RFA had the most robust annual program review processes, with well-established methodology and evaluation criteria dating back to the 1990s. RFE/RL used an internal panel composed of a Regional Director, the Director of TV/Video Production, the Digital Media Editor, the Internet Technology Project Manager, the Standards Editor, and journalists from other services. RFA used a smaller but similar internal review panel supplemented by three contracted external experts for each language service. Modeled in part on the RFE/RL and RFA approaches, MBN in 2019 implemented an in-house process using both internal and external panel reviewers. At RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN, network leadership generally attended the review readout sessions with the respective language services and program units.

²⁰ OCB had no established annual program review process or staffing in place to perform systematic monitoring and evaluation of its program content. USAGM's own research and evaluation staff performed an annual content evaluation review for OCB (three contractors performed the 2019 USAGM-conducted OCB review), but the lack of specialized in-house staff at OCB to lead an on-the-ground follow-through on program review recommendations, as occurs at the other networks, limited its effect. Because establishment of an internal annual program review process is covered under OIG's recommendation 1 in this report, OIG did not make a separate recommendation here.

Voice of America Conducted Annual Program Reviews for Approximately Half of its Language Services

VOA completed annual program reviews for only 23 of its 47 language services in 2019. VOA's approach to annual program reviews varied over the years. Since 2015, VOA had used an in-house process relying on a single program analyst review rather than the panel approach used by RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN. VOA told OIG that staffing gaps left it short of its preferred benchmark level of one analyst per 7 language services, limiting its ability to carry out annual program reviews for all language services. USAGM's April 2019 program review policy states that each USAGM language service should be reviewed at least once per year. The USAGM Strategic Plan for 2018-2022 stresses the importance of assessing program effect to ensure that "everyone from leadership to editorial and support staff" can make "better-informed decisions toward achieving the mission." By failing to prioritize and adequately resource its program evaluation function, VOA undermined the ability of network leadership and staff to make well-informed decisions about program quality and impact and the appropriate allocation of resources to advance mission goals.

Recommendation 2: Voice of America, in coordination with the United States Agency for Global Media, should schedule and conduct a program review of each of its language services at least once per year. (Action: VOA, in coordination with USAGM)

Networks Used Spot Content Reviews as an Additional Quality Control Measure

OIG found that all five networks used spot content reviews as an additional means of quality control. Spot reviews ranged from editors performing random quality reviews of content for ongoing quality monitoring to one-time or sustained reviews by outside experts in response to specific concerns, as in the example of RFE/RL and its Tajik Language Service cited earlier. As with annual reviews, spot reviews identified specific areas for improvement. However, spot reviews can be resource-intensive, especially for the multi-language services like VOA, RFE/RL, and RFA, because of the need to utilize native speaking outside experts for translation purposes. USAGM and network staff responsible for responding to outside criticism told OIG that detailed complaints about specific content rather than broad generalizations improved the networks' ability to respond. When criticism cited a specific story or line of coverage, the networks typically carried out spot reviews to assess the specific concerns.

For example, White House officials, including the President, publicly criticized VOA in April 2020 for its reporting on COVID-19 that they considered overly favorable to China. USAGM and VOA officials told OIG that when they learned of the Administration's concerns about their reporting they immediately asked the VOA Standards Editor to perform a spot review of the content in question to ensure their work complied with journalistic standards for accuracy and comprehensiveness. OIG determined that VOA carried out the spot review in accordance with agency policy, and VOA leadership believed that its review showed that the content had been consistent with network journalistic standards. Addressing the incident in a message to staff, the VOA Director wrote, "we are pledged to uphold the highest standards of professional journalism [and] we do it to the best of our ability every day—and correct ourselves freely,

willingly, and openly if we get it wrong. This kind of scrutiny, however uncomfortable it may be, is also a great opportunity for us.” As noted earlier in the Background section of this report, OIG is prohibited from reviewing program content and therefore reviewed the spot check process and not the content or substance of the criticized coverage.

COMMUNICATION, HIRING, AND TRAINING

OIG reviewed the policies and procedures in place across the USAGM networks to ensure awareness of, and compliance with, journalistic standards and ethical principles through communication, hiring, and training. OIG determined that USAGM leadership and the five network heads at the time of the inspection generally modeled and communicated the importance of journalistic standards in accordance with the leadership and management principles contained in the Government Accountability Office’s *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*.²¹ Four of the five networks effectively communicated journalistic standards both externally and internally,²² with the exception of OCB, as discussed below. The networks also used hiring and new-employee orientation to strengthen compliance with standards. OIG found that all five networks conducted training for new employees to strengthen journalism tradecraft. However, ongoing training and systematic professional development required leadership’s attention.

Communication of Standards

Agency and Network Leaders Stressed Importance of Journalistic Standards in Their Messaging

The former USAGM CEO²³ consistently stressed the importance of journalistic standards in his internal and public messaging. He used Congressional testimony, his five strategic priorities, USAGM’s Strategic Plan, agency-wide town halls, and even his farewell blog to employees to communicate the importance of providing accurate, objective, independent, and credible news in support of freedom and democratic values. USAGM’s acting CEO continued his predecessor’s focus on the importance of journalistic standards. For example, he used the weekly CEO Flash

²¹ Government Accountability Office’s *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (GAO-14-704G, September 2014), Sections 1.01 (Tone at the Top, Standards of Conduct); 14.01 (internal communication); and 15.01 (external communication).

²² VOA maintained a corporate presence on USAGM’s internal intranet site, with clear links to the VOA Journalistic Code and Best Practices Guide. All three grantee networks also maintained intranet sites for employees that included information on network journalistic and ethical standards. The networks (except OCB) also publicized their guiding journalistic standards to external audiences and the broader public through their public websites. The USAGM public website contained links to the VOA charter, Best Practices Guide, and Journalistic Code. VOA’s own public website featured the same material, while the public websites of RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN similarly included links to their guiding journalistic standards. All the networks except OCB also posted public statements clearly noting their source of funding as the U.S. Government, through USAGM, with additional phrasing that emphasized their legally based professional independence.

²³ The former CEO served from September 2015 until September 2019; USAGM’s Chief Financial Officer served as acting CEO from October 1, 2019, until June 9, 2020.

Report of March 5, 2020,²⁴ to praise the managing editor at VOA's Bangla Language Service for putting the proper editorial controls in place for the daily Rohingya broadcasts.

OIG also found that, at the time of the inspection, the leadership at all five networks emphasized journalistic standards in their public and internal communication. For example, in advocating for accreditation for journalists in Tajikistan in November 2019, the RFE/RL president told the country's leader that RFE/RL would not compromise its journalistic standards because of government threats or intimidation. The RFA president invoked journalistic standards in a March 2020 statement protesting the conviction and sentencing of a blogger who contributed to RFA's Vietnamese Service. In an April 2020 public statement, the VOA Director cited the VOA charter to state, "We are free to show all sides of an issue and are actually mandated to do so by law."

Office of Cuba Broadcasting Did Not Effectively Communicate its Journalistic Code Internally or Externally

OIG found that OCB did not effectively communicate its applicable journalistic standards²⁵ to external audiences or to its employees. OCB was alone among the USAGM networks in not posting a publicly visible statement of journalistic standards on the USAGM website (under "Entities"), nor was there any elaboration of journalistic standards on OCB's own public internet site at the time of the inspection. OCB also lacked current guidance on journalistic standards for its employees. The most recent English language version of OCB standards was dated 1991, prior to the advent of OCB's digital programming. The only version in Spanish, the working language of many network employees, was dated 1985. As noted earlier in the discussion of major lapses in journalistic standards at OCB, office staff were uncertain about what journalistic standards applied to OCB content, and previous directors had not prioritized updating the standards and clarifying unresolved questions about the network's core mission. According to the *Standards of Internal Control in the Federal Government*,²⁶ management should internally and externally communicate the necessary information to enable personnel and external parties to help the entity achieve objectives and address risks. Management should use appropriate methods in doing so, taking into consideration factors such as audience and availability. The lack of current and readily accessible standards guidance for employees heightened the risk of employee noncompliance. The absence of public statements about the organization's journalistic standards also meant that OCB forfeited an opportunity to bolster its

²⁴ The CEO Flash Report was instituted by the previous CEO and continued by the acting CEO at the time of the inspection as a weekly newsletter for staff highlighting key activities within the organization.

²⁵ The 1983 Radio Broadcasting to Cuba Act (Pub. L. No. 98-111, October 4, 1983, 97 Stat. 749, Sec. 3[b]), and the 1990 Television Broadcasting to Cuba Act (Pub. L. No. 101-246, February 16, 1990, 104 Stat. 58, as amended, part of Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, see Sec. 243(b)) state that each type of broadcasting "shall be in accordance with all Voice of America standards to ensure the broadcast of programs which are objective, accurate, balanced, and which present a variety of views." OCB, established in 1990 to oversee the operations of Radio and TV Marti, drafted "OCB Radio and TV Marti Editorial Guidelines" citing the "VOA Programming Handbook, Third Edition" (1991).

²⁶ GAO-14-704G, September 2014, Sections 14.02, 14.07 (internal communication) and 15.03, 15.07 (external communication).

credibility and trustworthiness as a news organization and to model and promote journalistic standards to Cuban audiences whose national media lack these attributes.

Recommendation 3: The Office of Cuba Broadcasting should develop an updated version of its journalistic standards and communicate those standards in English and Spanish to its internal workforce and external audiences. (Action: OCB)

Spotlight on Success: Translating Standards into Key Local Languages Promoted Awareness, Reinforced Credibility

USAGM's five networks use 61 languages to communicate with audiences worldwide. Several networks translated journalistic standards into local languages to improve awareness of those standards both among employees whose native language is not English and to their target audiences. In the case of VOA, these translations were done by individual language services, such as the Spanish Service's version of the Best Practices Guide or translations of the Journalistic Code into Albanian and Macedonian. At RFE/RL, the network translated portions of its policy manual into Russian, including journalistic, ethical, and social media principles. MBN's intranet site contained its Journalistic Code of Ethics and other standards guidance materials translated into Arabic as a professional resource for employees. At RFA, several services, such as the Burmese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, and Vietnamese, had translated the RFA Code of Ethics. Network leadership told OIG they believed this practice helped establish and reinforce their credibility and trustworthiness as news organizations while also modeling and promoting journalistic standards with audiences in countries where those principles are absent or at risk.

Standards-Based Hiring and Training

Networks Used Hiring and Orientation to Strengthen Compliance with Standards

All five networks had policies and protocols in place to hire employees with previous journalism experience and appropriate skills. Network hiring processes included updated position descriptions tied to standards, in-house reviews of past experience and qualifications, and multiple interviews with prospective employees. However, network staff told OIG that, due to the imperative to hire individuals with requisite language skills and country knowledge, not all employees had previous journalism experience. Some came from activist backgrounds or societies ruled by repressive governments and, as a result, required more initial standards training.

The networks' human resources and other staff conducted initial ethics and standards orientation and training during in-processing for all newly hired journalists. Topics generally included sourcing and attribution, financial disclosure, conflict of interest, plagiarism, and copyright infringement, among others. Employment agreements for contractors, including freelance reporters, included compliance with journalistic standards as a requirement of employment. Those employees without journalistic experience received additional training at

orientation. OIG noted, however, that ongoing training required leadership's attention, as discussed below.

Networks Lacked Training Plans to Ensure Consistent Professional Development on Standards

OIG found that although all five networks conducted tradecraft and ethics training,²⁷ especially when an employee first joins the staff, they generally lacked systematic professional development plans focused on journalistic standards. Instead, the networks tended to conduct training on a one-time basis prompted by network leadership initiative. For example, the VOA director mandated a course on "Balanced and Bias-Free Reporting" in 2017 and a firewall training course for all staff in 2018 and in 2019. Training was sometimes a reaction to specific concerns or violations of journalistic standards. For example, RFE/RL worked with USAGM to set up a 1-week workshop on news management and storytelling following the problems revealed during the Tajik Language Service review discussed earlier in this report. Some of the recent OCB training came only as a result of the anti-Semitic content incident described earlier, and none of that training was in Spanish. Senior officials at all networks, while noting to OIG these and other mostly ad hoc examples of standards-based training initiatives, acknowledged the need for more systematic training and development plans at their networks.

Additionally, OIG found that networks frequently assigned training as a collateral duty to employees who had significant other duties. For example, at OCB, the training officer was also in charge of security. At MBN, the General Counsel, in addition to her legal responsibilities, also trained new employees on the major elements of MBN's Journalist Code of Ethics, particularly copyright and libel laws. The RFA lead on training was also responsible for network research and evaluation. USAGM's Manual of Operations and Administration commits to providing "worldwide training and development policies, programs and services that enable the Agency to carry out its mission by fostering the improvement of individual and group performance, encouraging professional growth and enhancing employee capabilities."²⁸ Lapses in journalistic standards caused by inattention to systematic training and professional development risk damaging the credibility and effectiveness of the networks.

Recommendation 4: The United States Agency for Global Media should direct each network to develop systematic employee training on journalistic standards and related professional development plans. (Action: USAGM)

²⁷ Since 2018, RFE/RL's Office of Journalism Production and Training has provided new employee and sustainment training in interviewing skills, digital and broadcast newswriting, and video storytelling. RFA staff participated in workshops conducted by the Poynter Institute, the International Center for Journalists and National Public Radio, and the Society of Professional Journalists, in addition to RFA's own in-house training. MBN contracted for training in investigative journalism, ethics, writing to video, and broadcast presentation skills. OCB staff received training during periodic visits to Miami conducted by the VOA Standards Editor. At VOA, the Standards Editor provided regular and ongoing training sessions on best practices to full-time and contract employees.

²⁸ The International Broadcasting Bureau Manual of Operations & Administration, Part I Organization, 300 Organizational Definitions, Section 380.3, Associate Director of Management, a. Office of Human Resources, para 9.

RECOMMENDATIONS

OIG provided a draft of this report to the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) for its review and comment on the findings and recommendations.^{1, 2} OIG issued the following recommendations to USAGM, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, and Voice of America. USAGM provided technical comments from three of the broadcast networks—Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks—that were incorporated into this report, as appropriate.

Recommendation 1: The Office of Cuba Broadcasting, in coordination with the U.S. Agency for Global Media, should prepare and communicate with its staff a comprehensive plan for timely implementation of the editorial oversight reforms, including annual program reviews. (Action: OCB, in coordination with USAGM)

Management Response: The Office of Cuba Broadcasting concurred with this recommendation.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Office of Cuba Broadcasting prepared and communicated with its staff a comprehensive plan for timely implementation of the editorial oversight reforms, including annual program reviews.

Recommendation 2: Voice of America, in coordination with the United States Agency for Global Media, should schedule and conduct a program review of each of its language services at least once per year. (Action: VOA, in coordination with USAGM)

Management Response: Voice of America concurred with this recommendation.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that Voice of America scheduled and conducted a program review of each of its language services at least once per year.

Recommendation 3: The Office of Cuba Broadcasting should develop an updated version of its journalistic standards and communicate those standards in English and Spanish to its internal workforce and external audiences. (Action: OCB)

Management Response: The Office of Cuba Broadcasting concurred with this recommendation.

¹ USAGM did not provide formal written comments on this report. OIG's guidance to USAGM, when it was sent the draft report for review and comment, stated that if formal written comments are not submitted, OIG will conclude that the agency concurs with the recommendations.

² OIG faced delays in completing this work because of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting operational challenges. These challenges included the inability to conduct most in-person meetings, limitations on our presence at the workplace, difficulty accessing certain information, prohibitions on travel, and related difficulties within the agencies we oversee, which also affected their ability to respond to our requests.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Office of Cuba Broadcasting developed an updated version of its journalistic standards and communicated those standards in English and Spanish to its internal workforce and external audiences.

Recommendation 4: The United States Agency for Global Media should direct each network to develop systematic employee training on journalistic standards and related professional development plans. (Action: USAGM)

Management Response: USAGM concurred with this recommendation.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that USAGM directed each network to develop systematic employee training on journalistic standards and related professional development plans.

APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

This targeted inspection was conducted from April 30 to August 13, 2020,¹ in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspections Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

OIG provides the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive Officer of USAGM, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and USAGM. This targeted inspection's overall objective was to assess how USAGM and its five broadcasting entities are ensuring that U.S. Government-funded international broadcasting meets the broadcasting standards and principles contained in the 1994 Act.

OIG's specific objectives were to determine whether USAGM and the five networks had established:

1. Internal controls policies and procedures governing journalistic standards and ethics consistent with the requirements in the 1994 Act, including sufficient policies and procedures to monitor and address real or alleged content inaccuracies, bias, and ethics violations.
2. Effective communication, training, and employee workplace practices and policies to ensure awareness of and compliance with journalistic standards and ethical principles.

Scope and Methodology

This inspection reviewed USAGM's journalistic standards and principles, as implemented through policies and procedures across its five broadcast entities, in effect for the period FY 2018 to FY 2020. OIG reviewed and compiled the results of survey instruments and conducted interviews with USAGM and network personnel. At the conclusion of the inspection, OIG reviewed the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations with offices and organizations affected by the review. OIG used professional judgment, along with physical, documentary, testimonial, and analytical evidence, collected or generated, to develop findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations.

Jefferson Brown (Team Leader), Brent Byers, (Team Manager), Wes Carrington, and John Lightner conducted this targeted inspection. Other report contributors include Dolores Adams, Leslie Gerson, and Caroline Mangelsdorf.

¹ OIG conducted the fieldwork for this targeted inspection from April 30 to June 5, 2020.

APPENDIX B: HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY OF U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING

1942	The Voice of America (VOA) began broadcasting in 1942 to counter Nazi propaganda.
1948	The United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, known as the Smith-Mundt Act, established the terms for U.S. Government engagement in public diplomacy and authorized “creation of an information service to disseminate abroad information about the United States, its people, and policies.”
1950	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) went on the air with a broadcast to Czechoslovakia.
1953	President Eisenhower established the United States Information Agency (USIA), under Executive Order 10477 and the President’s Reorganization Plan No. 8, to carry out public diplomacy. VOA became the single largest element of USIA.
1973	The International Broadcasting Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-129) established the Board for International Broadcasting to oversee and fund RFE/RL.
1976	President Ford signed into law (P.L. 94-350) the Voice of America Charter, intended to protect the independence and integrity of VOA programming.
1983	The 1983 Radio Broadcasting to Cuba Act established Radio Marti.
1990	The Television Broadcasting Act to Cuba established TV Marti; Radio and TV Marti merged under the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB).
1990	USIA established the Bureau of Broadcasting to consolidate its three broadcasting services—VOA, the WORLDNET Television and Film Service, and Radio and TV Marti—under one umbrella organization supported by an Office of Engineering and Technical Operations.
1994	The International Broadcasting Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-236) abolished the Board for International Broadcasting, established the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) within USIA, and brought all U.S. non-military international broadcasting under the aegis of BBG.
1996	Radio Free Asia (RFA) was founded under the provisions of the 1994 Act (P.L. 103-236) and began programming in Mandarin.
1998	The Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 abolished USIA and divided its duties between the Department of State and BBG, which became a separate agency in 1999. BBG assumed authority for VOA, OCB, and its three grantee organizations (RFE/RL, RFA, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks).
2002	Radio Sawa began broadcasting in 2002. The Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), established in 2003, began Alhurra Television broadcasts in 2004.
2016	The National Defense Authorization Act of FY 2017 (P.L. 114-328) contained technical amendments to the 1994 Act, establishing the position of Chief Executive Officer and an International Broadcasting Advisory Board, in place of the Board of Broadcasting Governors established in the 1994 Act.
2018	BBG changed its name to the United States Agency for Global Media to reflect its modern operations beyond radio and television into digital and mobile platforms.

Source: Compiled by OIG from information supplied by USAGM, Department of State, and other sources.

APPENDIX C: U.S. AGENCY FOR GLOBAL MEDIA GOVERNING STRUCTURE

Principal Statutory Functions and Authorities of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- To direct and supervise all broadcasting activities.
- To review and evaluate the mission and operation of, and to assess the quality, effectiveness, and professional integrity of all such activities within the context of the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States.
- To ensure that United States international broadcasting is conducted in accordance with the standards and principles contained in Section 303 [see Appendix D].
- To review, evaluate and determine, at least annually, after consultation with the Secretary of State, the addition or deletion of language services.
- To make and supervise grants and cooperative agreements for broadcasting and related activities in furtherance of the purposes of this Act and on behalf of other agencies, accordingly.
- To allocate funds appropriated for international broadcasting activities among the various elements of the Board and grantees, subject to reprogramming notification requirements in law for the reallocation of funds.
- To review engineering activities to ensure that all broadcasting elements receive the highest quality and cost-effective delivery services.
- To undertake such studies as may be necessary to identify areas in which broadcasting activities under its authority could be made more efficient and economical.
- To submit to the President and Congress an annual report which evaluates and summarizes activities [including steps taken to review and evaluate the mission and operation of, and to assess the quality, effectiveness, and professional integrity of all such activities within the context of the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States].

Statutory Functions and Authorities of the Board

- To provide the CEO with counsel and recommendations for improving effectiveness and efficiency of the agency and its programming.
- To meet with the CEO at least twice annually and at additional meetings at the request of the CEO.
- To report periodically or upon request to congressional committees specified in subsection (d)(2) regarding its counsel and recommendations for improving effectiveness and efficiency of the agency and its programming.
- To obtain information from the CEO as needed to fulfill these duties.

Source: The United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994, Sections 305(a) and 308(e), as amended through P.L. 114-328, enacted December 23, 2016.

APPENDIX D: JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES

The 1994 International Broadcasting Act—Standards and Principles

(a) Broadcasting standards

United States international broadcasting shall:

- (1) Be consistent with the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States.
- (2) Be consistent with the international telecommunications policies and treaty obligations of the United States.
- (3) Not duplicate the activities of private United States broadcasters.
- (4) Not duplicate the activities of government supported broadcasting entities of other democratic nations.
- (5) Be conducted in accordance with the highest professional standards of broadcast journalism.
- (6) Be based on reliable information about its potential audience.
- (7) Be designed so as to effectively reach a significant audience.
- (8) Promote respect for human rights, including freedom of religion.

(b) Broadcasting principles

United States international broadcasting shall include:

- (1) News which is consistently reliable and authoritative, accurate, objective, and comprehensive.
- (2) A balanced and comprehensive projection of United States thought and institutions, reflecting the diversity of United States culture and society.
- (3) Clear and effective presentation of the policies of the United States Government and responsible discussion and opinion on those policies, including editorials, broadcast by the Voice of America, which present the views of the United States Government.
- (4) The capability to provide a surge capacity to support United States foreign policy objectives during crises abroad.
- (5) Programming to meet needs which remain unserved by the totality of media voices available to the people of certain nations.
- (6) Information about developments in each significant region of the world.
- (7) A variety of opinions and voices from within particular nations and regions prevented by censorship or repression from speaking to their fellow countrymen.
- (8) Reliable research capacity to meet the criteria under this section.
- (9) Adequate transmitter and relay capacity to support the activities described in this section.
- (10) Training and technical support for independent indigenous media through government agencies or private United States entities.

(c) Voice of America broadcasts

The long-range interests of the United States are served by communicating directly with the peoples of the world by radio. To be effective, the Voice of America must win the attention and respect of listeners.

These principles will therefore govern Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts:

(1) VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive.

(2) VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions.

(3) VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies.

Source: The United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994, Pub. L. 103-236, Title III, §303, April 30, 1994, 108 Stat. 4.

APPENDIX E: U.S. AGENCY FOR GLOBAL MEDIA STAFFING AND FUNDING

STAFFING (FY 2019 levels)

U.S. Agency for Global Media	Civil Service
Executive/Support/Technology Staff	538
Voice of America	971
Office of Cuba Broadcasting	100
Total (Federal)	1,609
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty	699
Radio Free Asia	274
Middle East Broadcasting Networks	725
Total Non-Federal Entities	1,698

Source: U.S. Agency for Global Media.

FUNDING (FY 2020 levels)

Description	Amount (\$000)
Federal Entities	
Voice of America	253,761
Office of Cuba Broadcasting	20,898
International Broadcasting Bureau	47,735
Office of Technology, Services, and Innovation	177,515
Total, Federal Entities	499,909
Non-Federal Entities	
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty	124,460
Radio Free Asia	45,637
Middle East Broadcasting Networks	108,866
Open Technology Fund	19,825
Total, Non-Federal Entities	298,788
Broadcasting Capital Improvements	11,700
USAGM Total	810,397

Source: U.S. Agency for Global Media.

ABBREVIATIONS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
MBN	Middle East Broadcasting Networks
OCB	Office of Cuba Broadcasting
RFA	Radio Free Asia
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
USAGM	U.S. Agency for Global Media
VOA	Voice of America

UNCLASSIFIED



HELP FIGHT

FRAUD, WASTE, AND ABUSE

1-800-409-9926

www.stateoig.gov/HOTLINE

If you fear reprisal, contact the
OIG Whistleblower Coordinator to learn more about your rights.

WPEAOmbuds@stateoig.gov

UNCLASSIFIED