United States Department of State
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors
Office of Inspector General

Report of Inspection

Voice of America
Central News

Report Number ISP-IB-08-06, October 2007

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- The new leadership at Voice of America (VOA), along with even more recent changes to the leadership of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), has made a good start on an energetic process to address systemic internal communication, and organizational and leadership challenges facing VOA's Central News Division (CN). Much remains to be done.

- Inadequate horizontal and vertical internal communication, changes in the types of technology needed to reach VOA's target audiences, combined with U.S. government-wide problems of funding and staffing, had left CN with an inadequate management structure, inefficiencies, and poor morale.

- The increased focus on television and the Internet will require a massive shift in resources and an infusion of technical and editorial talent throughout the relevant International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB)and VOA offices. To date, neither sufficient funding nor human resources have been identified and allocated to these programs. VOA needs to develop a comprehensive strategy for the integration of these new technologies into their products.

- There was a widespread lack of awareness of administrative guidelines. Operational handbooks, position descriptions, and the Manual of Operations and Administration (MOA) were not being kept up to date. There were vacancies in, and inadequate training for, key administrative and management positions.

- Training in leadership skills, resource management, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and technical skills was not tied into broader agency mission and career development goals.

- All parties interviewed as part of this inspection were in agreement that products issued by CN should continue to be unbiased summaries of news presented in an accurate, objective, and comprehensive manner in accordance with the VOA Charter.

- There was a need for improved internal controls and accountability in support of overseas operations.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between April 20 and July 19, 2007, and in New York City, on June 12, 2007. Ambassador Eileen A. Malloy (team leader), Frank Ward (deputy team leader), Francis Cheever, Boyd Doty, Martha Goode, Christine Grauer, Marjorie Lynch, Kristene McMinn, and Vandana Patel conducted the inspection.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The scope of this inspection was to be limited to an assessment of the operation of VOA's Central News Division. CN, a critical component of VOA, identifies news to be covered, assigns reporters to do the coverage, edits their work, and makes the product available to VOA's 45 language services. It uses a worldwide network of correspondents and freelance stringers to gather information that will eventually be packaged for transmission over radio, television, and the Internet. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) team found early on in the fieldwork for this inspection that most of CN's structural and management problems could not be remedied by CN's leadership alone because these managers did not control CN's personnel, budget, or technical support. While it was beyond the scope of this inspection to evaluate operations external to CN, the OIG team has made note of conditions in the wider BBG, IBB, and VOA structure that impacted on the work of CN. The positions of VOA within the BBG structure and CN within VOA are illustrated in Attachments A and B.

The grantees[1] that receive U.S. government funds and operate under the supervision of the BBG have a different set of approaches to their programmatic offerings. The grantees produce material that goes beyond the VOA's "accurate, objective, and comprehensive" news format, to include what one BBG official described as "journalism with a mission" but which the new BBG Chairman has referred to as "journalism with purpose." The operation and editorial content of these grantees was outside the scope of this inspection.

[1]The term "grantee" refers to those semiautonomous international broadcasting operations that are under the supervision of the BBG and may receive some logistical support from IBB, but that tend to be self-contained in their management and administration, and are considered to be nonprofit organizations that receive U.S. government funds to do their work. This work is primarily to provide information in the native language of countries where a free media is not in operation. These grantees include: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (including Radio Farda, a joint Persian language broadcast service with VOA); Radio Free Asia; and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (Radio Sawa and Alhurra TV).

Who's In Charge?

The leadership of CN was in transition during the entire inspection period. A highly experienced VOA news editor was appointed as acting managing editor of CN just prior to the onset of the inspection. During the inspection this acting managing editor had no principal deputy due to the illness (and subsequent death) of the incumbent. Also, in the course of the inspection, the administrative program manager for CN (alternatively referred to as the lead administrative officer of the Central Programming Directorate, or Program Manager) was reassigned to another VOA position outside of CN leaving a gap in this key position. In recent years, position descriptions and work requirements statements have not kept up with changing structures. Positions have been created, filled, and then left empty leaving confusion among the staff about who does what, and to whom they report. Under the circumstances, the OIG team was limited in its ability to assess the leadership skills exercised by the acting managing editor of CN but the team did make a number of observations and suggestions as outlined in this report.

Communicating the Vision

One of the more striking observations was the lack of understanding of the BBG's strategic vision that was exhibited by the CN rank and file reporters and editors in interviews with the OIG team. For example, while the BBG Strategic Plan for 2002-07 calls for a concentration of BBG assets on those media markets "where most needed in support of U.S. strategic interests," most CN reporters and editors interviewed by the OIG team expressed dismay that VOA was no longer positioned to provide worldwide English-language news. The majority of CN staff members, most of whom come from a radio journalism background, characterized management's efforts to increase television production as poorly planned and dramatically underfunded. The fact that resistance among CN staff to these programmatic changes was so high is indicative of the need for improved internal communication both within CN and between CN and VOA, IBB, and BBG leaders.

During the inspection BBG/IBB organized a series of meetings to brief CN staff (and other VOA employees) on the 2008-13 BBG Strategic Plan in order to seek buy-in to the profound business practice changes this plan would bring about. BBG/IBB management contracted with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to conduct focus groups on the survey results to assist the agency in identifying actions to be taken in response and to discuss morale issues in an effort to deal with concerns that have eroded job satisfaction (as evidenced by BBG/IBB low ranking on the Federal Human Capital Survey). On July 10, 2007, BBG held a town hall meeting to introduce the new Chairman of the BBG where an open question

period was welcomed. While these initiatives are to be commended, BBG management does not have an on-going communication mechanism that ensures that CN staff members fully understand the BBG strategic vision and understand the operational plan designed to meet the goals and objectives of the strategic vision.

Recommendation 1: The Broadcasting Board of Governors, through the International Broadcasting Bureau and Voice of America management, should develop and implement an internal communication strategy, building upon and institutionalizing the briefings begun in May 2007, to introduce the staff to the 2008-13 Strategic Plan and to educate staff members about the structure and roles of the various parts of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. (Action: BBG)

Morale

The OIG team found morale within CN to be poor; a finding consistent with the low ranking given to BBG/IBB in the most recent Federal Human Capital Survey. When CN staff members were asked by the OIG team to name the causes for the low morale in CN, the most common answers were the lack of transparency in decisionmaking, lack of clarity as to the future role of CN, and concerns about reductions in force (RIF), the diminution of CN's traditional role as the preeminent producer of news for distribution on all VOA services, and favoritism in choice assignments and promotions. Many women and minority employees were particularly unhappy with the opaque way many promotions and assignments are handled within CN. This report contains recommendations for ways to improve compliance with EEO mandates as well as suggestions for improvements in transparency in allocation of resources and assignments. The cause of the single most pervasive morale problem in CN, the lack of clarity as to the future role of CN and its staff, is one that can be ameliorated by improved communication as described in the recommendation above.

Generational Change

The CN work force has been static for many years. Promotion opportunities are limited, and staff members tend to stay in their positions for an extended time, with many having more than 20 years of experience at VOA. This gives the entity a strong repository of institutional memory, but it also means that the existing workforce is less welcoming and less comfortable with new technologies. The strategic

vision of the BBG and the desire of the new VOA Director to tailor CN production content to the media used in any particular target country make VOA's traditional reliance on radio broadcasting outdated. As VOA looks ahead to possible RIFs due to elimination of certain programs or services, it is likely that senior staff members from those eliminated and/or reduced programs will seek places in CN, thus limiting even further management's ability to attract staff members with strong backgrounds in these new technologies.

Managing Change - New Technologies

The BBG, IBB, and WorldNet television had been parts of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). The Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 consolidated USIA into the Department of State (Department), effective October 1, 1999. BBG and IBB were established as federal government entities independent of the Department. WorldNet television was created in the 1980's as a USIA public diplomacy tool to create persuasive studio-quality television programs for international audiences. VOA also had developed its own beginning television efforts, but as a journalistic enterprise subject to the strictures of the VOA Charter. Three years after the merger of VOA and WorldNet, although many WorldNet assets have been absorbed by VOA television, the role and nature of VOA television, particularly in the work of CN, was still unclear. The OIG team found that this lack of clarity has had a negative impact on the functioning of CN and recommends that the BBG develop a business plan for the integration of television programming into its programmatic offerings (see Recommendation 10).

The Internet is the future of international communication. VOA has created a web site to provide English-language news reports and to serve as a portal to the homepages of all 45 languages broadcast by VOA, as well as to other information about VOA. The web site offers audio and video files on demand, and live streamed video programs as well as text. But, as with television, the VOA organization and professional staff trained to reach the world with shortwave radio is having trouble reinventing itself into a 21st century multimedia operation that can make the best use of the Internet. The OIG team found that good work was being done with Internet innovation in several parts of the BBG/IBB/VOA complex. However, coordinated management, adequate funding, and sufficient staffing were not yet in place. The OIG team recommends that the business plan for the integration of Internet operations into the wider television and radio programming of the agency approved on July 10, 2007, by the BBG's VOA committee be given wide dissemination within the organization (see Recommendation 14).

Resolution of the litany of problems listed above will require a strong leader, one who is adept at managing change, to begin the process of creating a transparent and equitable work place, to develop buy-in on the BBG Strategic Plan with its profound operational changes, and to attract and retain key employees with the right mix of skills. On July 7, 2007, the CN managing editor position was announced publicly for open competition.

Recommendation 2: Voice of America should require all bidders on the managing editor (Central News Division director) position to demonstrate a strong record of leadership skills and make this criterion an essential factor in the position description requirements. (Action: VOA)

There is a serious need for more comprehensive training for CN staff. Professional skill development to equip the staff to deal with the BBG's decision to increase emphasis on television and the Internet, and training to address the skills deficit of the administrative staff were needed. There was also a remarkably widespread lack of understanding of the structure and processes of the organization. Staff and middle managers would be more effective and less confused if they understood the decisionmaking process, the organizational structure and budget, and the roles of the various parts. More effective program management and leadership training are needed throughout the organization. In addition, EEO training is not adequately encouraged by top management.

Recommendation 3: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should assess training needs, both in professional and managerial skills, and develop a training plan and budget proposal to address documented weaknesses in the Voice of America Central News Division. (Action: BBG)

The Impact of BBG, IBB, and VOA Structure on CN Operations

The confusion about who is in charge, described above, is exacerbated by the fact that the institutional functioning of CN as a part of VOA and of the larger structures of IBB and the BBG is flawed. This inspection has underlined issues beyond the scope of this inspection that have been discussed in internal and external studies of BBG elements for several years. These have been raised in the Booz Allen Hamilton study commissioned by the BBG and in a number of OIG reports of inspections of individual domestic and overseas BBG offices.[2] They are: that a complex management structure inhibits the ability of the organization to respond to needed change; that administrative guidelines are absent, outdated, or misunderstood; and that failures of vertical and horizontal communication within the structure have undermined the morale and efficiency of the organization.

VOA often lacks the ability to respond to the fast-breaking changes in today's media world. The institution, and particularly its Director, has limited authority to make decisions. The grantee broadcasters are self-contained, with their chief executive officers overseeing most of their administrative support services as well as their programming. The Director of VOA, however, only looks after programming and is dependent upon IBB for human resources, budget, procurement, marketing, engineering, and other administrative support.

CN does not control its own resources (positions or funding), nor does it control all the technology and equipment needed to produce its product. For example, while the Central Video Unit has some small digital cameras, it does not own or control the professional level mini-cameras used to film video material for its products. Likewise, the video editing studios it uses, and the professional cameramen who film video products are controlled by the VOA Operations Directorate. Those language services that benefit from targeted enhancement funds contribute to the funding of equipment and studios that, while not directly under their control, are expected to be used primarily by those services. As the heads of the Associate Directorate of Language Programming (LS) and VOA's Operations Directorate hold a higher rank (associate director) than the CN chief (managing editor), there is a perception that CN needs have not been given the same priority as LS or Operations in the battle for ever-dwindling resources.

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[2]Booz, Allen, Hamilton: Final Report of the Voice of America and the International Broadcasting Bureau, Broadcasting Board of Governors, Vol I : Washington DC, July , 2006. pp. 16-19. 66-69.

Basic production unit decisions require extraordinary levels of approval and/or clearance. For example, a simple decision to hire an employee to fill an existing, authorized position involves numerous steps and/or approvals that can require signatures going all the way up to BBG governors. The BBG governors do not normally reside in Washington, and most perform their functions via e-mail and telephone, meeting as a group just once a month. Decisions move slowly through this complex process, resulting in delays, lost opportunities, and frustration on the CN work floor.

The CN administrative unit supports other parts of VOA and IBB. For example, the administrative program manager of CN was the contracting officer for many of the language services. This overlapping of responsibilities combined with a reported lack of transparency, and the fact that budget decisions affecting CN operations have been made without first consulting CN meant that CN units were not able to conduct forward planning or devise long-term strategies. CN directors, traditionally senior journalists, had ceded the management of resources to the administrative program manager, who was considered by some staff to be competent and innovative, and by others as prone to favoritism and highly secretive. The fact that VOA did not have up-to-date written administrative policies and procedures had given the administrative officer wide latitude to decide which proposals should be funded and which not.

Recommendation 4: Voice of America should hold the managing editor (Central News Division director) responsible for all administrative and budgetary decisions taken in the Central News Division and accountable for adhering to best management practices. (Action: VOA)

Managing the Workplace Overseas

In addition to CN, a number of IBB elements and various language services maintain overseas offices to support their programs. BBG-funded grantee organizations such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty or Radio Free Asia also maintain overseas operations. In some countries these entities have colocated to save U.S. government funding while in others, the grantee organizations have leased and operated separate premises in order to emphasize their nongovernmental status. Some of the LS correspondents received support from the CN administrative program manager and staff that she oversees – primarily related to funds management. Over time, due to the fact that this officer was viewed by those serving overseas as being more responsive and more professional than the designated IBB or VOA support organizations, the CN administrative support office took the lead on assisting and overseeing contracting, human resources, procurement, financial management, and

leasing work for CN, and to some extent non-CN organizations operations overseas. This expansion of duties did not appear to have been under the active control of the CN director, nor did there appear to be an effective system of internal controls in place. Decisions as to optimal locations for overseas operations were made without a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis and without reference to the extensive overseas experience held by other Foreign Affairs agencies of the U.S. government.

Recommendation 5: The Voice of America should develop and implement a sustainable and transparent plan for the support of each of the Voice of America's overseas operations, to include the implementation of effective internal controls mechanisms. (Action: VOA)

The Firewall

CN reporters and editors guard their journalistic independence. They speak of the VOA Charter and the concept of a "firewall," protecting their work from political interference with a fervor rarely seen in government operations. Americans in and out of public life often argue that VOA should be more aggressive in promoting U.S. government policy. They may be unaware that VOA, by law, is supposed to present "accurate, objective, and comprehensive" news and to represent "not any single segment of American society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions," with only limited and clearly identified editorial comment. (See Attachment C, The Voice of America Charter)

A number of CN staff members reported pressure from previous senior VOA management and from individual governors sitting on the BBG to change the tone of news reporting on the war in Iraq, environmental issues, etc. Those staff members who cited such pressure were not able to provide the OIG team with evidence. Many felt that the CN reporters and editors had operated under a system of self-censorship in order to avoid perceived problems with upper management. This self-censorship had a corrosive impact on morale and, in their opinion, diminished the journalistic integrity of CN reporting. At the same time, the Governors who sit on the BBG see themselves as the true guardians of the "firewall" fending off pressure from the Executive or Legislative branches to compromise the VOA Charter. The U.S. Code section establishing the BBG, USC § 6203, stipulates that the Inspector General "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." In accordance with this stipulation, the OIG team did not attempt to review the journalistic content produced by CN.

CN staff members reported that the new VOA Director who assumed his duties only months before the start of the inspection has already had a positive impact on morale in CN. Reporters and managers report that he has "protected" them from political interference in their work and has allowed them to concentrate on their work. Whether these allegations of past political interference in the content of news reporting are true or not, the fact that the perception is widespread warrants efforts by VOA upper management to bring the issue out in the open and to make clear that the "firewall" applies equally to BBG and IBB upper leadership. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the VOA Director engage staff in an open discussion to outline his vision of what falls within the "firewall" and what falls outside of it.

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

THE CENTRAL NEWS DIVISION

Central News in the Context of BBG/IBB/VOA Operations

For 65 years, VOA has been the best known U.S. government-funded medium of communication with the rest of the world. It was a powerful weapon in winning the Cold War. Its standard of journalistic integrity and professionalism was widely recognized. The VOA's CN and its antecedent offices have been seen as the heart of the agency.

VOA has grown to become a network of 45 language services that produce radio programming in shortwave, medium wave (AM) and frequency modulation (FM) bands as well as television and Internet programming. VOA programs are transmitted via satellite, from U.S. government-owned transmitters in different parts of the world, and via more than 1,200 affiliate radio and television stations that place VOA programs among their broadcasts. Although numbers change daily, in April of 2007, VOA had over 1,100 full-time employees around the world. This included 14 overseas bureaus in major world capitals, 22 domestic and 16 overseas correspondents, 31 locally employed staff, and more than 90 freelance "stringers" acting as reporters.[3] The audience for VOA programming is estimated to be over 115 million people each week. CN is the hub of this vast operation providing the core radio and television news articles for all of the 45 language services, including the English language service.

[3]VOA domestic news bureaus are in Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and Washington, DC, with the greatest number of reporters (16) being in Washington. Overseas bureaus are in Bangkok, Beijing, Cairo, Dakar, Hong Kong, Islamabad, Jakarta, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, London, Moscow, Nairobi, New Delhi, and Seoul. VOA has tried to keep a correspondent presence in Iraq full time since 2003.

VOA does not exist in a vacuum; it is part of a larger community of U.S. government international civilian broadcasting. VOA covers the news of the world and for many years was a part of USIA's effort to "tell America's story to the world." Early in the Cold War, grantee (or "surrogate") radio efforts such as Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty began to direct programming to "captive peoples" giving them news of events inside their own countries from a perspective different from the regimes they lived under. The grantees may have broadcast in some of the same languages as VOA, but their mission was different. Thus today, more than 75 language services (both direct government and grantee) make up BBG's complex of broadcast languages, broadcasting material in a total of 60 different languages, 45 of those languages broadcast by VOA.[4]

By 1994, with the Cold War over, in an effort to streamline and economize, all civilian U.S. government broadcasting was brought under a single BBG with a nine-person, bi-partisan board nominated by the President and confirmed by Congress. Its individual members, usually coming from successful careers in private sector media, have sought to bring modern marketing and programming strategies to government broadcasting.

BBG has oversight of: (1) The nonprofit grantees and (2) the two federal government entities: the VOA and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (Radio and TV Marti).

The grantees are funded to do much of their own broadcasting, administrative support, evaluation, and programming. The two federal entities receive administrative (such as personnel, contracting, and security); program (marketing and performance review); and engineering (transmission and information technology) support through the IBB. IBB provides differing degrees of engineering and program support (transmission, security, and marketing) to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Radio Free Asia, Radio Sawa, and Alhurra. The BBG includes the grantees in its worldwide audience research contracts with Intermedia. But while there may be occasions in different parts of the world where VOA shares facilities, equipment, or information with the grantees, it has no authority over grantee policy or content.

[4]"BBG Broadcast Languages and Language Services" chart, prepared by BBG, July 17, 2007.

The BBG's broadcasting network is vast and complex. A network of transmitting stations and satellite networks operated by IBB, along with some leased stations, sends VOA's programs instantaneously around the world. VOA alone produces more than 1,000 hours of programs each week. Twenty-three of VOA's 45 language services, including English, are broadcast on television as well as radio. Programs are broadcast from the VOA headquarters in southwest Washington, DC from 27 radio studios, 33 production and recording studios, 30 professional audio mixing and dubbing stations, four television studios, 21 video editing suites, and facilities for master control, recording, scheduling, and feed intake. VOA has the largest integrated digital audio system in the world.

Central News, at Home and Abroad

CN works out of a 30,000 square foot news room staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, providing between 150 and 200 news reports per day for all language services and programs. Program content includes news, features, education, and culture in documentary, discussion, and call-in formats, both live and prerecorded. CN coordinates the work of its 207 people around the world to produce text, images, and television product to serve the 45 VOA language services. These materials are made available throughout the BBG network via the "house wire." VOA employees, using their internal Intranet system can go to the News in English Broadcast Wire (NEB) to find the articles they need. These products are all double-sourced to the high standards of VOA's editors, and ready to be translated and fit to the specific needs of a particular language service.

In the past, CN senior professional radio journalists produced the text and all the language service did was translate and read the news. The Central Video Unit and the new Internet unit were created to play a similar role. Today, however, some of the language services are staffed by world-class journalists, television professionals, and webmasters who rely less on CN. Some of those services have received added staff and funding as Congressional or Administration priorities shifted and VOA has sought increased resources for priority languages. The increase of resources for some language services has further reduced their reliance on CN. As CN resources have been cut in recent years and key positions left vacant, CN staff and management are left unsure of their future role in VOA.

The CN Division managing editor leads five units: the Assignments Desk Unit that ensures that its foreign and domestic correspondents, and all CN reporters, and background writers provide quality on-the-scene coverage and in-depth reports; the Central News Service Unit regional desk writers and editors who furnish the information for the CN on-line compilation of news reports for use by the language ser-

vices; the Central Video Unit that creates short television items and longer television packages for use by the language services; the Focus Unit that contributes daily long-format (six minutes in length) news analyses; and the Webdesk Unit that ensures that VOANews.com carries the full range of news products produced in English by CN.

Changes to the roles of VOA bureaus in London and Hong Kong have had an impact on the morale and operating conditions of Washington-based CN staff. In order to assure European coverage and a 24-hour editing capability, the London regional production center had a technical staff, a correspondent, and two editors whose responsibilities included Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. In July 2004, VOA brought the editing functions back from London to Washington. The move has caused mixed feelings among staff and left the London bureau with excess leased space.

In the following year, VOA expanded its news production from Hong Kong in order to address difficulties staffing the CN night shift in Washington. The theory was that while most people slept in Washington, it was daytime in East Asia, and writers and editors in Hong Kong could augment CN's 24/7 news room and English language web site staffing during prime time news hours. A request to fund this project appeared in the January 2006 expenditure plan proposed to Congress. It was not approved, but while waiting for approval, staffing did shift in Hong Kong and contractors were hired. By the time of this inspection, the new Director of VOA had begun to execute a plan to pull back from Hong Kong some portion of its responsibilities.

VOA leadership found that supporting an expanded staff and an office in Hong Kong proved to be more expensive than expected. Few VOA employees wanted to move there. The original plan was based on the assumption that qualified journalists could be hired locally in Hong Kong without the need to offer a full overseas benefit package. However, senior CN staff reported to the OIG team that the U.S. income tax implications of direct-hire positions and the complications of obtaining a U.S. security clearance made it problematic to identify and hire overseas-based qualified correspondents. The BBG FY 2008 budget proposed cost reductions to include bringing the Hong Kong editorial function back to Washington. The Resource Management section includes a further discussion of the Hong Kong office.

The New Central News Room

Over the last three years, CN has experienced physical changes that have contributed to differences in the way the staff works. In February 2004, VOA unveiled

a state-of-the-art news room that brought together all of VOA's radio, television, and Internet professionals along with studios, edit suites, and intake facilities. Many on the assignments desk and other CN unit staff expressed dismay with the physical set-up of the news room. It is visually attractive and makes a lively backdrop for the open television studios used by different language services at one end. But problems of street noise, wiring, heating and air conditioning, and lighting have yet to be resolved. The assignments desk staff is seated next to the television studio used by the language services. During television broadcasts, the area is uncomfortably cold. Assignments branch staff also say that they must be quiet when television is on the air. This has caused problems because the assignments desk has to field overseas telephone calls where the connections are not always clear, requiring raised voices. The Webdesk and other subsections of CN make the same complaints. The assignments desk would like to be closer to the area of the Washington correspondents. VOA management said that it is reviewing the problem. There was discussion of a Plexiglas partition around the television studio. But on June 29, 2007, VOA management put a hold on the partition. They will attempt to control the noise first by placing audio baffling in the ceiling.

Recommendation 6: The International Broadcasting Bureau, in coordination with the Voice of America, should resolve the issues of noise and temperature control in the news room. (Action: IBB, in coordination with VOA)

Central News Division Management Changes

From 2004 to the present, the frequent and sudden turnovers in VOA management have contributed to the sense of confusion and alienation among the CN staff. As management changed, so did CN procedures. In July 2004, the VOA Director at that time had reorganized CN, adjusting shift schedules, replacing the managing editor, and changing the duty editors to supervising editors with enhanced authority. VOA also redefined television's role in CN; initiating a selection of television news pieces twice a day on a schedule designed to fit the needs of those language services which had television audiences. Integrating television and radio took on increasing urgency at VOA. In September 2005, the Associate Director of CN, who had directed many of these innovations, left after a little over a year on the job, leaving reorganization plans unimplemented. His position has never been filled.

In some cases, the titles of managers have changed, causing confusion about the chain of command. There have been two managing editors of CN, an associate director for Central Programming (a new title used by only one person but vacant since 2005), a senior supervising editor (a title allegedly created for one person who has moved on to be a senior advisor for news in the VOA front office), a manager of the Central News Service, and an assignments desk chief. The assignments chief currently is filling the critical positions of acting managing editor of CN and acting manager of the Central News Service. There have been similar turnovers for managers in the Web and Central Video Units.

Thus, by June 2007, CN had no associate director and an assignments editor who was acting in the capacities of managing director for both news and programs, as well as chief of the assignments desk. Additionally, the division had lost the services of the experienced administrative program manager.

VOA Central News Assignments Desk

The CN assignments desk in Washington is staffed 24 hours a day by its 11 editors. Those editors deal directly with reports prepared by all domestic correspondents, including Washington "beat" reporters. They also deal directly with reports from Latin America, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East as well as Asian copy whenever the Hong Kong Regional News Center is closed. All bureaus, reporters, stringers, and assignments editors report to the chief of the assignments desk.

Editors make assignments based on daily meetings with CN management and representatives of LS. While they assign stories to correspondents, they also accept suggestions for possible stories from correspondents and stringers. After editing scripts, the desk sends them back to be voiced by the correspondent.

Changing Priorities

Assignments desk staff expressed frustration at having unclear priorities and no specific goals in this period of increased focus on television news by VOA leadership. The only written guidance that today's assignments staff has for reference is IBB's MOA Section 380.14, dated 1999. An assignments desk editor was recently assigned to integrate radio and television in the assignments desk process. Some staff members still feel confused by an evolving and ambiguous chain of command. In one example of the confusion, a production specialist was given conflicting assignments for both radio and television and did not know which manager could set the

priorities. Assignments desk personnel must juggle the schedules to accommodate breaking news, planned programming, and now both radio and television.

Recommendation 7: The Voice of America should develop and implement standard operating procedures for the Central News Division assignments desk staff to follow in deciding how to prioritize taskings. (Action: VOA)

Assignments Desk Direction of Stringers

The assignments desk manages the work of freelance reporters (stringers). As the number of VOA correspondents dwindled due to reduced budget and changes in the roles of overseas correspondents, VOA increasingly came to rely on stringers for worldwide coverage. Staff on the assignments desk and correspondents themselves report that it is crucial to identify and cultivate stringers. New stringers need to be mentored and encouraged. As the number of VOA news bureaus worldwide gets smaller, it has become harder to cultivate these relationships from long distance. Assignments desk editors, overseas correspondents, and language service managers informed the OIG team that they considered stringer pay rates to be inadequate. They said that the pay rates are lower than those paid by VOA's competitors and that decreasing contact with stringers posed the likelihood that loyal stringers would be harder to find and maintain, especially on short notice. In the course of OIG inspections of VOA facilities, OIG teams have found that VOA overseas bureaus faced problems in competing for stringers when paying them at the current IBB rates. IBB's *Contracting for Talent & Other Professional Services Handbook (2004)* sets the payment rates for stringers. The handbook was updated by memorandum in 2005 to provide a price increase for videotape recording technicians and to add or revise categories for television personnel. It did not raise any other rates at that time. However, CN administrative staff stated that the rates could be waived when there was adequate justification.

Recommendation 8: The International Broadcasting Bureau should review and revise, if found appropriate, its payment rates for freelance journalists, taking into account international competition and Voice of America's increasing reliance on such journalists for worldwide news coverage. (Action: IBB)

Coordination of Assignments

A large part of the tasks of the assignments desk is to coordinate news coverage. Overlaps occur when a language service covers its own story but does not inform the desk. Overlaps can also occur when CN managers make assignments without informing the assignments desk. This has happened for television coverage during the early stages of incorporating television news. Assignments desk staff said that in the past some frustrated correspondents went directly to managers and skipped the assignments desk. The result of uncoordinated coverage is wasted resources and, some say, embarrassment for the correspondents who show up at an event to find there are three or four VOA elements covering the same thing.

CN has a number of procedures to coordinate and track assignments. There are morning and evening editorial meetings of division directors to discuss coverage. LS personnel are at these meetings. There is an on-line "Insights" listing where correspondents can record what they are working on as well as deadlines. There is also CN's daily on-line line-up of the 10 top stories. Each day the assignments desk uses the Reuters daybook, a listing of the top stories to be covered. The desk provides a weekly "look-ahead." In addition, the chief assignments editor and his unofficial deputy send out notes to the assignments desk and the Washington correspondents for the next day's stories. There is also a group e-mail for the Washington correspondents to post what they are working on and to share information.

IBB's Office of Performance Review (P/R) recommended in September 2003 that VOA's Central News File and NEB-issued Correspondent Reports "consider revision of management systems and telecommunications and computer technologies used for interaction between news providers and news consumers, including patterns and schedules for VOA and news room editorial meetings."

The assignments desk is looking at electronic ways to plan and track work. Immediately prior to this inspection, it began piloting a commercial service that looks promising. The service includes a calendar of topics and Internet links for sources and information. The assignments desk has also looked at a commercial product to plan television coverage. Television planning is crucial because so much must be done in advance. The desk has also considered an in-house spreadsheet used by one of the language services to track who is covering what. There appeared to be no off-the-shelf software that will work for all of VOA's language services and the assignments desk. Fortunately, after much comparative testing by July 2007, CN and LS agreed upon a commercial program. The price was very good, and the need was great. CN, although its funds were limited, purchased the program for all of VOA. Only four of the 40 "sign-ups" actually reside in CN. In future years, CN hopes to

have the language services and other offices of VOA who will use the greater share of this service, pay for their share.

IBB/E, and the Policy and Planning Division, have had ad hoc meetings to study what technology might help. An information technology (IT) manager said that IT was reviewing the possibility of creating an Intranet portal for daily basics such as coverage coordination. The study is ongoing. IT has also bought MicroSoft's SharePoint that may be of use in resolving this problem in the future. In addition, a proposed migration to Microsoft Outlook and Exchange could allow group scheduling.

Recommendation 9: The Voice of America should devise and implement both procedural and technological solutions to track news assignments, including television, to avoid redundancy, and to ensure adequate coverage. (Action: VOA)

Voice of America Washington Correspondents

VOA headquarters in Washington has the greatest number of staff correspondents. They cover the White House, the Pentagon, the Department, and Capitol Hill. Others do background work and miscellaneous assignments, such as science or economics. In interviews and personal questionnaires, the correspondents were referred to as the "jewels in VOA's crown."

Need for Regular Meetings of Washington Correspondents

Washington correspondents reported that they do not see each other regularly. There are no regularly scheduled meetings. Six of them do most of their work in press rooms at their assigned site and only occasionally come to VOA headquarters. Three correspondents suggested independently that it would be helpful to have brown-bag lunches or some other regularly scheduled meeting to discuss big issues and help each other with angles for stories. A regular meeting would enhance camaraderie. The chief assignments editor called it an excellent idea. "Everyone hates more meetings, but this would give the correspondents a chance to talk over ideas, stories, and assignments." The OIG team informally recommended that CN institute a periodic meeting of the Washington correspondents. The meeting could

take place in an informal setting, such as a "brown bag lunch" and should provide correspondents the opportunity to communicate about ideas, stories, assignments, and other pertinent issues.

Voice of America Central News Service and the Focus Unit

Writers and Editors

The writers and editors section of the VOA Central News Service is composed of nearly 50 employees. There are normally eight duty editors that oversee an online compilation of news reports for use by LS. A recent death and a resignation have left two vacancies. The duty editors act as watch officers, with at least two manning each shift. There are usually 14 copy or regional editors and about 23 writers. There is also a small sports section of four writers. The three-person Focus Unit, the remainder of a much larger operation responsible for news analysis pieces, is officially separate, but is generally seen as part of this news room community.

The pool of talent in the Central News Service is formidable and encompasses an array of experience, from the Kuralt Fellow who is well-versed in the latest broadcast journalism technology, to the news room veterans. Despite the range of concerns expressed by the writers as a whole, their commitment to their mission remains strong.

On a daily basis, the writers sift through the news from different wire services to find interesting stories that translate well to a radio broadcast. Their work product is wire copy, which is essentially a 40-second radio piece covering a news item. These are passed to the copy and regional editors and finally to the duty editors for correction and approval. As news disseminators, they work in a unique niche in the industry since they generally do not engage in the news gathering function, which is left to correspondents and individuals who are assigned special in-depth reporting projects from time to time.

Sports Desk

The sports desk performs a unique function in CN because the writers and the editor who work on the desk combine practical news room experience with specialized knowledge of sports and the attendant rigors of sports reporting. The sports

desk writers not only write wire pieces, but they also broadcast from the field during major sporting events. Their work product often demands travel to sporting competitions around the world as well as domestically. However, the writers report that their position descriptions do not reflect the full array of their work responsibilities. See the Management section for a discussion of this issue.

Kuralt Fellows

The Kuralt Fellows program is an entry-level recruiting program that each year brings in one talented writer from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This program entails a variety of rotational assignments during the one year fellowship, allowing the Fellow to work with the Central Video Unit, on the Webdesk, in CN writing wire copy, or overseas as a correspondent. Other writers would like to have the same opportunities but cannot get permission to take the time away from their jobs to participate in the kind of career enrichment activities that are available to the Fellows.

The Central News Radio Tradition and Voice of America's Shift to Television

There is great concern among the CN staff about VOA leadership's efforts to expand into television broadcasting. Although individual writers are intrigued by the concept, the majority of the staff interviewed by the OIG team was worried about the implication of this shift on the organization and their jobs, and the capacity of the organization to make the shift. Linking a new emphasis on television with the proposal to eliminate the English language service, as English language radio writers, editors, and reporters, they were worried about where they, and the products they create, would fit.

Most correspondents, writers, and editors, as well as enthusiastic supporters of increased VOA television broadcasting, felt strongly that the radio branch of the operation should be maintained at full capacity in order to continue to reach an important audience in the developing world, as well as to preserve VOA brand recognition. They expressed dismay about television programming that LS makes to order for independent, overseas television stations (such as the English service does for India's Aaj Tak network) which interlocutors understand that VOA pays to run the stories but which often do not display the VOA logo. Productions are also dependent on local affiliates for transmission and may be refused or censored at will. Many CN staffers were critical of the quality of the current television products from

both LS and the Central Video Unit as compared to other commercial and government broadcasters already in the market. The concerns about past efforts to turn radio professionals into one-man-band video journalists (VJs) were raised in many interviews during this inspection and in field inspections such as the September 2005 Broadcasting to Pakistan inspection. Current VOA leadership is moving away from the solo VJ concept.

CN interlocutors were unclear about the overall agency plan for television and how they and their colleagues could adapt to the different skills required for television production. There was confusion among correspondents as to how long reports should be or what kind of deadlines to expect or whether to prepare "hard news" or "in-depth stories." Some correspondents were concerned that journalistic standards in the VOA Charter and the two-source rule were difficult to achieve in a short television report.

Impact of New Technologies: (I). The Central Video Unit

Structure

The organizational structure within which CN operates has complicated television operations in a way that keeps it from meeting the expectations of BBG and IBB/VOA leadership. While it is understood that the BBG wants its broadcasters to move aggressively into television, neither the nature of such movement nor the specific operational plan has been made clear to the professional staff members who are to implement this massive shift. The scope of work for this inspection was to evaluate the existing situation, in which CN combines radio and television functions. At the time of this inspection, in addition to the video created in CN by the Central Video Unit, nearly two dozen different language services had invested in their own television production components as part of, and in addition to, their primary radio functions. The BBG Policy unit also produces its own television programs. This generation of television products by 23 separate elements of VOA poses special problems.

VOA Central Video Unit does not produce, transmit, or market its own material. Central Video produces video segments that then are offered to LS, which may or may not elect to use them in their programs. Thus Central Video does not produce actual programs. Programs are produced by the language services and transmitted by IBB/E. Some are marketed by IBB's Office of Marketing and Program Placement. At the time of the inspection, no one on the VOA staff could give the OIG team a

clear idea of how much of the institutional budget was going into these 23 different television-producing entities. On July 3, 2007, the CFO did provide estimated resources supporting television programming, which has been included in Attachment D of this report.

For years, VOA had been organized around its channels of distribution, radio and television. Now, as many commercial networks have done, it is reorganizing to focus on markets. This shift from channel of distribution to market focus is not an easy one for the long-term VOA staffers.

IBB provides support through a separate chain of command. Thus, while the BBG encourages VOA to move into a multimedia world at a rapid pace, the realities of bureaucratic structure and funding have produced a disjointed constellation of autonomous, but not self-sufficient, operations trying to achieve this massive change.

Recommendation 10: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should finalize and disseminate to all parties involved a business plan for the integration of television into its programmatic offerings outlining, at a minimum, the current and future vision and goals, required staffing and budgeting resources, equipment requirements, training plan, and its integration plans with the radio and Internet components. (Action: BBG)

Morale

As a distinct entity within VOA, the Central Video Unit faces unique morale issues. It lacks a sense of corporate culture. In 2004, WorldNet was eliminated and its elements incorporated into various parts of the VOA organization. CN received the part responsible for television news, which was designated the Central Video Unit. In the course of the next two years, all regular English language program production ceased. This radically changed the mission of the unit. During the WorldNet era, the television news staff produced original, regularly scheduled programs. Since incorporation into VOA, the television news function placed in CN has been recast as a service provider to the language services. Several staff members expressed dismay over their perceived reduced status.

Central Video Unit staffing has declined. In February 2005, Central Video had 34 employees. By May 2007, it had but 20 with vacancy announcements open for two unfilled positions (positions converted to create camera/editing jobs). The changed mission of the Central Video Unit with its diminution of responsibility, as well as loss of staff, has adversely affected morale.

In addition, in 2004, the inclusion of the Central Video Unit as an integral part of CN merged formerly separate television and radio services together. Since the merger, CN management has not developed measurable goals and guidelines for the Central Video Unit. This issue is covered under Measurement of Outcomes, Recommendation 16. Moreover, CN is not, and has never been except for one year, led by individuals with television expertise. Consequently, decisions affecting the Central Video Unit are made by individuals who may lack the skills and experience to fully comprehend the unit's operating requirements. Several staff members said this factor has had an adverse effect on the video unit because the television medium is so different from radio. Staff members argue that they are not fungible; time frames for producing television are longer; technical skills are very different.

Past VOA and CN management had expected radio staff to convert to television production with minimal training, and in some cases, to continue their existing levels of radio responsibilities. It does not appear that the full costs of television production or the staff skills needed were taken into consideration. Consequently, some television-trained radio staff continued to focus largely on radio production. Central Video needed to hire new staff skilled and experienced in the television medium. But given limited budgets and hiring restrictions, radio managers have resisted surrendering slots to television professionals. Several staff members stated their understanding that as WorldNet and other veterans retired, empty television slots went to other parts of VOA and Central Video became smaller. Some positions may have been eliminated as a result of budget cutting requirements; others may have been transferred to meet new VOA priorities. The impact on Central Video staff has been a sense of a loss of significance in the organization.

Services

Central Video provides LS with four main services: VJs' stories, custom stories, production capabilities, and clearinghouse facilities. Video-journalists travel the United States and the world creating stories for LS. The VJs' stories also fill critical gaps in contracted commercial news feeds by providing backgrounders and in-depth issue stories on items from the feeds. In addition, the VJs create stories on American life, society, and culture, all of which are important topics under the VOA Charter.

The Central Video Unit initiates the ideas for most of the TV packages it produces, based on its own news meetings and on comments from the general news meetings and additional meetings with the managing editor and CN and Assignments chiefs. These are generally referred to as TV packages. They can be reported by a VJ, or, increasingly, a reporter accompanied by a camera crew.

"Custom Stories" -- The Central Video Unit also receives frequent requests for specific stories from Language Service division directors or their program managers at the 9:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. general news meetings. Sometimes referred to as "custom stories," they too are issued as TV packages that can be reported by a VJ or reporter and crew.

"Production Capabilities" -- Strictly speaking, production capabilities (e.g., a camera shooter and a producer/editor to complete production of the piece) are not provided to the language services directly but are available to produce and edit pieces done by News Division reporters.

"Clearing House Facilities" -- This is a fairly recent but highly valuable production and writing service in which Language Service TV pieces deemed of house-wide interest are edited and revoiced in English for house-wide distribution by Central Video Unit. The originating Language Service collaborates in this effort by providing English translation of the original piece.

Products

Central News Video provides the house with three feeds a day. There are the morning and afternoon CN files plus an evening compilation or "Comp Reel." The Comp Reel includes feature material and analysis in addition to straight news. The feeds consist of materials of general interest that allow the language services to concentrate more on producing other reports for their target areas. This offers savings in time spent writing, locating footage and selecting shots as they can be done once for all and not once per language service. The feed products are ready to use upon translation of the script, replacement of the English sound track, and integration of the foreign language track with the video. LS produced television stories that have house-wide interest are selected by the clearinghouse group for adaptation and reuse. The group rewrites and reedits the stories so that they can be used by all language services and distributes them as part of the evening "Comp Reel." VOA plans to replace the "Comp Reel" with the NewsFlow application, which will make stories digitally available to the entire house as soon as they are produced.

Operations

VOA's current organization makes it difficult to share production resources across services and divisions. The proliferation of VOA language services producing or preparing some form of television programming has occurred without an equivalent increase in studio facilities or professional camera crews. It has not been unusual for multiple language services and/or Central Video to send staff to cover the same event resulting in duplicative efforts. While managers have explained that each crew may be covering the event from a different perspective and is aware of the concerns and is working to keep such duplication to a minimum, many CN television correspondents and language service staff reported occasions of redundant coverage. As noted in Recommendation 9, the OIG team recommended that VOA review duplication of effort currently expended by CN and LS and develop an action plan to minimize redundancy.

The movement to television has included the hiring of new staff and the training of former VOA radio staff to be VJs. These operate as "one-man bands" with mini-cameras and Apple laptops, being the reporter, the videographer, and the editor in addition to filing electronically from the scene of the action. At the time of this inspection, there were two technical problems related to these multi-skilled reporters that VOA had not fully resolved: (1) the "Mac" laptops were not being serviced by IBB computer support staff; (2) VJs in both the domestic and overseas bureaus were unable to access the IBB visual archives and could not, therefore, produce a complete video package without this essential resource for images. The OIG team informally recommended that efforts to address these issues be pursued.

Professional television camera crews, only about seven individuals, film for both Central Video and all the language services but work for none of them. They are part of the VOA Operations Directorate. Consequently, the users can only request the crews' services. With such a small camera staff and with the competing priorities of the Central Video Unit and the Division of Language Programming, requests cannot always be filled. The current level of staffing is not in keeping with BBG's desire to shift its emphasis towards more and better television programming. At the end of the inspection period, the director of VOA television was able to report that two vacant slots had been identified which would be filled by two cameraman/editors for the Central Video Unit.

The number of editing suites available for Central Video is inadequate because the suites must be shared with the many language services, and the latter, apparently because of time constraints to meet broadcast times, have priority. The result is that Central Video gets to use the suites at the least desirable times. It is also assigned the suites with the most antiquated equipment, which further impacts on the quality of the unit's product. This sometimes results in the failure of Central Video to produce timely stories or products of a quality that LS can rely upon. NewsFlow, discussed in a section below, is supposed to alleviate this problem when it is fully operational, but during the period of this inspection, the competition for the editing suites, the breakdowns of NewsFlow and the program material lost because of these issues only became more serious.

The smaller language services that produce television programs or feeds have limited resources. They rely heavily upon Central Video. Under the current arrangement, those language services that are currently receiving enhanced funding are able to establish their own video staffs, and also have priority access to the editing suites and other common services of the Operations Directorate. Better access to these services by Central Video would have a beneficial effect on the less-favored language services and provide quality material throughout VOA.

Recommendation 11: The Voice of America should develop and implement procedures based on objective criteria to achieve a transparent process for the allocation of professional camera crews and editing suites. (Action: VOA)

Unit Management

The history of the Central Video Unit is symptomatic of managerial problems faced by CN and much of VOA. Senior leadership wanted to expand television capacity, but middle management did not have adequate resources. A series of CN directors and VOA Directors and associate directors made changes in position descriptions and organizational structures that are discussed above. As a result, the responsibilities of the Central Video Unit's managers are not clear to the staff they supervise. The unit is headed by a GM-15 executive producer and a GS-15 supervisory editor. On their position descriptions, the management duties of each are stated, but in discussions with the staff, there remains confusion about whom to go to for what. Their employees referred to the two as co-managers. Some seemed to think the unit had joint management; others were aware responsibilities were officially separate, yet said for practical purposes, there was joint management. Some individuals said one

of them was their rating supervisor, but the other gave them day-to-day direction. Fortunately, both managers have many years of television experience and are proficient in the medium. They work well together, and this brings strength to the unit.

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Once again, the history of the unit plays a part in its morale. It is a composite of the remnants of the very different USIA WorldNet and VOA Television entities and of the first attempts to create a cadre of VJs from existing staff members. The first VJs came as volunteers from WorldNet, not hired from outside with television experience. Some of the volunteers were motivated by unhappiness with their jobs at the time. During a long period of training, they were encouraged to work with complete independence. Few editorial, productivity, or even attendance regulations were enforced. When higher management reversed this approach, the current unit managers were called upon to reintroduce production standards. Enforcing this change added to interpersonal tension in the section.

As in other parts of VOA, employees speaking to the OIG team expressed a fear of challenging unit management by filing official complaints or grievances because of possible retribution. In Recommendation 26 discussed in the Management section of this report the OIG team recommends a comprehensive agency-wide response to these concerns.

Recommendation 12: The Voice of America should clarify and publicize the responsibilities of the Central Video Unit's managers, regularize the lines of supervision, and develop and implement a plan to ensure objective assignment procedures, and assure the continued use of appropriate language and adequate communication by unit management. (Action: VOA)

NewsFlow

Numerous Central Video Unit staff members cited technical problems with NewsFlow and also reported inadequate training in its use. Not yet fully operational, NewsFlow is a video news room management system that will enable VOA news production to move from analog to digital infrastructure. Digital will provide an efficient, high quality program production and delivery mechanism. IBB/E procured NewsFlow through a fixed price contract awarded after open competition on December 10, 2004. IBB acceptance testing of NewsFlow was done in July 2005, and full acceptance was granted August 24, 2006. The cost was approximately $2.3 million. The OIG Report of Inspection of IBB/E issued in October 2006, reviewed the contract and found no problems with the awarding of the contract.

Currently, NewsFlow is used to ingest video files and to support the early stages of editing. This allows content producers to screen satellite-fed and original video content and to select material for use. When fully operational, NewsFlow will assist in the management, processing, and broadcast of television video content and grow into a principal video production workflow tool. Since full acceptance of the system, the IBB/E and the IT Directorate have worked on software fixes and enhancements.

The question has arisen as to why in June 2007, almost a year after full acceptance, NewsFlow is not operating as envisioned. For example, on July 11, 2007, half of the day's work product could not be posted on NewsFlow due to an unresolved problem with the program. Central Video Unit staff said there was limited consultation with the end users, and the result at present fails to meet their needs. The IBB/E stated that users' concerns were addressed in the original contract. Indeed, numerous meetings between IBB/E and CN managers were held to develop the contracting bid package, but end users were rarely involved. VOA management explained that the design phase coincided with the merger of WorldNet into VOA, so some of the "television personnel" consulted ended up assigned to LS rather than to the Central Video Unit. Further, IBB and VOA changed the requirements during NewsFlow's development, and the contractor failed to fulfill all its promises. As reports of these problems spread through the agency, the reputation of NewsFlow became worse than the reality.

An improved version of NewsFlow is scheduled for installation in July 2007. The question remains as to whether the result will meet end users' requirements, or whether capabilities they expected were not purchased. NewsFlow is a critical tool needed to enable Central Video to move into the digital age. If NewsFlow does not meet needs upon becoming fully operational, CN must address this. A specific recommendation related to NewsFlow would not be appropriate at this time, as the system has not been finalized, but it is an indication of the lack of coordination between IBB support elements and the units they support.

Recommendation 15 in the Internet and Information Management section, addresses the BBG-wide issue of end-users not being sufficiently involved in the selection of equipment or programs related to their work.

NewsFlow users in CN explained that training in the system to date has been insufficient, and they do not understand how to use it properly. This is the time for management to address this lack training and to develop and implement a program to impart sufficient technical knowledge to the employees who must satisfactorily implement NewsFlow.

Recommendation 13: The International Broadcasting Bureau should develop and implement a plan to train the Central Video Unit staff in the necessary skills for using NewsFlow productively. (Action: IBB/E, VOA/CC)

Impact of New Technologies: (II) The Internet and Information Management

Voice of America Central News' Internet Presence

The use of the Internet as an avenue to share and communicate stories and information has increased significantly in recent years. In addition to radio and television, the CN Internet staff has become a key component in providing important news and information to the public. As cited by VOA management, "the Internet provides an unlimited opportunity to reach audiences in every corner of the world, to communicate directly with the audiences without having to be constrained by third party intervention." The main English language web site for VOA, www.voanews.com, is managed by a team of 11 individuals. The staff posts the most recent stories on the web site. Content for the stories is derived from news wires, and the team edits for style, checks facts, and adds photos and links.

Despite the concerns voiced about television by concerned CN rank-and-file, the Webdesk is widely hailed as an innovation that can further strengthen VOA's reputation. Some interlocutors have posited that the Internet could become a better vehicle than television for video because it could provide inexpensive, live streaming video broadcasts that could reach more people than satellite connections that have been withdrawn in the past by foreign governments during times of crisis. Although the Webdesk is very busy and tends to be understaffed, many writers were impressed with the amount of work they manage to accomplish. There is a lack of communication between the Webdesk and the writers, and many writers expressed a desire to know more about what the Webdesk would like them to do in terms of formatting and style. The business plan suggested in Recommendation 14 should encourage this communication.

In early 2000, VOA management had created a Webdesk pilot project to establish a successful permanent Internet presence within CN. After developing the concept behind the English web site, the pilot committee presented their proposal to the Director of VOA in May 2001. The proposal included several recommendations, suggesting a staff of 30 people with a clear organizational structure for the Internet group. According to the pilot committee, a staff of 30 would still be far below what competing organizations may employ; however, it would be a starting point. The members of the pilot committee found that a staff of 15 people would be insufficient to process all the text, audio, and graphics that are necessary to make the site consistent with VOA quality standards. The proposal also recommended that the Internet group be part of the budget creation process so that senior management could consider the spending priorities of those experienced with running the daily Internet operations before making final IT decisions for the organization.

The pilot project was completed several years ago; however, the CN Internet presence is still hampered by inadequate staffing, resources, budgeting, and the lack of a clear vision and goals for the Internet team. The current staffing of 11 individuals in the Webdesk Unit is less than the number of staff during the pilot project, yet they are expected to produce more content with advanced features. The Webdesk unit does not participate in the budget process for the organization. As a result, budget estimates and spending do not take into consideration the needs and requirements of equipment maintenance and purchases for producing and enhancing VOA's Internet presence. Most importantly, as this inspection period began, VOA had still not established a clear direction of where they see the Internet progressing within the organization and how the organization could enhance the interactive capabilities of VOA's Internet system and improve customer satisfaction.

Other reviews have cited similar findings. For example, the Booz Allen Hamilton report from July 2006, stated that the organization needs a more detailed plan to outline priorities, major milestones, and strategies for enhancing existing Internet capabilities. In addition, the report stated that the development of technical capabilities will require major capital investment, as well as increased dedicated staff and will require significant short and long-term prioritization and planning. The OIG inspection report of IBB/E[5] reported that the web presence is a stepchild to VOA's traditional broadcasting efforts, namely radio. The report also noted that VOA's Internet presence appears to lag behind most of its competitors in style, content, presentation, features, and readership.

P/R performed a study of VOA's English language program in March 2007.[6] The report highlights the increase in readership of the main English web site from around 14 million in 2004, to over 50 million and growing in 2006. The report notes that the Internet team is facing internal expectations to compete with other news broadcasting outlets such as the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Cable News Network – however, with less than one tenth of the staff needed. The report recommended that staffing be increased, that expectations be reduced to allow more focus on quality than quantity, and that VOA reexamine the organizational structure so the Internet group is provided with enhanced coordination and management.

The VOA Director has begun addressing some of the concerns cited by the OIG team and others. First, VOA management has highlighted the enhancement and organizational changes needed for the Internet component. Specifically, a document created by senior management mentions that VOA believes the Internet should be playing a much greater role in the distribution of their content to audiences by FY 2009. Looking forward, VOA sees Internet incorporating radio and television, while lowering costs for transmission. To enhance the Internet presence, the document describes four key tasks which must be accomplished: 1) regular updating of LS sites, 2) incorporating a full menu of interactive elements and making its content available on a variety of digital platforms, 3) having a centralized Internet team with a central budget and controls, and 4) having unprecedented cooperation between VOA's Internet team and the IBB's IT Directorate on the development and maintenance of the

[5]Inspection of the International Broadcasting Bureau's Office of Engineering and Technical Services, Report Number ISP-IB-07-03, October 2006.
[6]VOANews.com/English Program Review by the Office of Performance Review, March 6, 2007.

web site, including improving functionality and design. A business plan was drafted during the course of this inspection and was presented to the BBG VOA committee and approved on July 10, 2007. The business plan will serve as a roadmap for VOA's use of new technologies, detailing goals and costs for the Internet and web-based content.

Recommendation 14: Voice of America should finalize and disseminate throughout Voice of America, the International Broadcasting Bureau and the Broadcasting Board of Governors a business plan for the Internet component outlining, at a minimum, the current and future vision and goals, required staffing and budgeting resources, equipment requirements, and its integration plans with the radio and television components. (Action: VOA)

CN is also initiating a redesign of the VOAnews.com web site to enhance its capabilities and to be more in line with its competitors. To continue to improve readership, the Internet group began in early 2007, gathering feedback to identify any enhancements necessary for the web site. The feedback was gathered from readers, VOA web editors, and LS representatives, as well as from an analysis of site traffic and online surveys. The IBB IT Directorate's Internet Services division is also involved in the effort by providing support elements for the redesign initiative.

Based on feedback, the Internet group is discussing ways to add features such as polls and opinions to the web site to get the readers more involved. Also, increased usage of audio and video files is being researched. For example, VOA has launched a new daily video feature on the web site. A three and a half minute video web cast is being produced by the English division and can be streamed live or downloaded to media devices such as iPods for viewing. VOA hopes to increase readership among the 18-35 year-old demographic by providing more informative and entertaining daily news. The Internet group is also requesting staff to start looking into web trends, such as how users navigate the site, what they look at, and key words used. This will enable the group to determine how the web site could be better tailored for its audience. During the OIG inspection, a meeting was held with representation from the VOA Director's office, LS, Webdesk unit, and editors. The meeting brought together more than 50 individuals to discuss the status of the redesign effort and to encourage active discussions on issues. The OIG team commends the effort and encourages CN to continue with such meetings to ensure that user and system requirements are met.

International Broadcasting Bureau Support

At the time of the OIG inspection, CN staff purchased equipment or requested specific IT applications and tools in an ad hoc manner. There were no formal policies or procedures governing this process. As a result, staff members are either requesting equipment that is not compatible with the current infrastructure of the division or that does not meet the intended needs of the users. This issue was also identified during the 2006 OIG inspection of IBB/E. Both the 2006 and 2007 OIG teams found examples of new technologies purchased without coordination with the IT Directorate. The offices doing so had subsequently expected the IT Directorate to support these technologies, thereby straining the IT Directorate's resources.

Further, during the fieldwork phase of this inspection, the OIG team heard complaints regarding the purchase and implementation of the NewsFlow system. As mentioned earlier in the report, NewsFlow is a system intended to assist in the management, processing, and broadcast of television video content. However, users have mentioned that the system does not meet their needs. The OIG team was informed that the IT Directorate – which provides user, computing, Internet, network, and digital media support to VOA – had limited involvement in the purchase. As a result, the system does not address the intended need and is not completely compatible with the current infrastructure. The IT Directorate is addressing pending issues with this system; however, similar occurrences can be prevented in the future through the development and implementation of formal procedures. IBB did issue an updated "house-wide" policy on IT purchases on April 27, 2007. However, there remains a need for a formal vetting process within VOA for all IT equipment requests and purchases to ensure that all requests go through appropriate management controls before being sent to the IT Directorate. Such a process will provide VOA management and the IT Directorate assurance that IT requests and purchases are in line with VOA management's vision and goals for radio, television, and Internet components. A formal process, and management requirement that it be used, will allow the IT Directorate to ensure that equipment installations will function with existing hardware and software.

Recommendation 15: Voice of America, in coordination with the International Broadcasting Bureau, should develop, implement, and enforce a formal policy and procedures for staff requests for information technology equipment purchases and maintenance that assures both VOA division management and information technology approve the request. (Action: VOA, in coordination with the IBB)

There is no formal policy within CN regarding the use of personal hardware and software on VOA systems. The use of personal hardware and software on the network can introduce viruses and other malicious software to the network, threatening the integrity or availability of data and the security of the entire VOA network. This policy should come from the Chief Information Officer; however, to date the Chief Information Officer has not developed an organization-wide policy on the use of personal hardware and software on government networks, nor has one been disseminated to all supported entities. The OIG team noted the need for such policy in other reviews of IBB facilities. For example, in the inspection of IBB's Philippines transmitting station,[7] the OIG team found that staff members were using personal thumb drives on the network. In that inspection report, a formal recommendation was made requesting that an organization-wide policy be implemented by IBB regarding the use of personal hardware on the IBB/VOA network. OIG reiterates the importance of complying with this recommendation to the overall network security of BBG.

Measurement of Outcomes

The National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication (May 31, 2007) stresses the importance of evaluation and accountability in designing and sustaining information programs. Agencies are encouraged to establish a culture of measurement to examine the effectiveness and impact of their efforts. Showing evidence of effectiveness is becoming an increasingly important responsibility of government.

BBG is attempting to quantify the credibility of its broadcasts. One strategic goal in BBG's 2008 Performance Plan for Broadcasting Programming Support is "contributing to the trustworthiness of news and information." BBG has established measures of credibility based on audience research.[8] The performance plan, echoing BBG's Strategic Plan, stresses that "to remain competitive as reputable news and information sources, the central news and news bureaus must remain committed to the highest standards of journalistic principles."

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[7]Inspection of the International Broadcasting Board's Philippines Transmitting Station, 2007.
[8]The credibility score is determined by the survey question about "trustworthiness of news and information" of those sampled respondents who listened at least once a week to each station."

More difficult tasks are to measure productivity and impact. CN can measure a stringer's productivity because only reports that are judged acceptable for use are paid for. However, there is no comparable measure of a correspondent's productivity. Some background pieces take much longer to draft than quick news reports. Neither is there a measure for impact of news reports. This dilemma is under consideration by P/R as it strives for ways in which research surveys can assess impact.

Effective, coordinated measurement of results of VOA products in radio, television, and Internet media is lacking. CN management has not developed measurable goals or guidelines for the Central Video Unit. P/R conducts listener surveys through private sector contractors that indicate listener preferences and audience makeup. They prepare annual program reviews for each language service where the surveys are shared, where IBB/E reports on signal strength and transmission/reception issues, where the Operations Directorate and the units of Central Programming discuss with LS various aspects of their cooperation. It is a chance to discuss each language service's use of the products of CN, the Central Video Unit and the Webdesk. These efforts are useful in assessing content and quality of support desired by these services.

They do not, however, address the impact of the programs on their audience, or suggest whether or where the stories are televised. Some stories considered relevant and of high quality by CN and Central Video are not picked up by any language service and, therefore, are not broadcast. Usage logs exist for recording what stories are used, but the recording that is done is often inconsistent. VOA management is aware of this issue and is working to minimize any waste of materials. More needs to be done, especially in the area of metrics and usage reporting.

Recommendation 16: The Broadcasting Board of Governors, in coordination with the Voice of America, should develop performance measures for the Central News Division and implement procedures to provide reports on usage and outcome (impact) of its radio, television, and Internet products. (Action: BBG, in cooperation with VOA)

The Culture of Central News: Communication and Morale

The lack of communication between the BBG, IBB, and VOA management on the one hand, and CN staff on the other, leaves many staff members uncertain about the direction of VOA and their own future in the agency. These writers, editors, and correspondents are proud of their profession, but dislike the direction in which their organization is headed. They are passionately committed to the VOA Charter and the VOA mission, but their morale has been significantly impacted both by technological and societal changes affecting journalism worldwide and by VOA leadership's approach to communicating and managing change. While newer hires are more sanguine about the future, there are many long-term staff members who have lost hope of being promoted and lapsed into a despondent quietism, regarding their jobs as a threatened sinecure. They set the tone for the CN community and the mood that was recorded in BBG/IBB's poor showing in the Federal Human Capital Survey.

There were concerns on the part of this knowledgeable, articulate, but disaffected staff that pervaded most of the interviews and the responses to the OIG questionnaires. These concerns often related to policies which are management decisions. They were within the purview of BBG, IBB, or VOA managers and not that of the CN Director. But because of the intense commitment of the professional staff to the goals of the organization and the widespread confusion on their part about these policies, there appeared to be a relationship between staff concerns about the direction of the workplace and how efficiently they did their work. Thus, while this OIG inspection report should not comment on these policy choices, it can recommend (see Recommendation 1) that these are matters which management should do a more effective job of explaining to its staff and assessing their impact on productivity. These concerns, some cited above, include:

- Cuts to English language programming: CN staffers, committed to a successful tradition of a radio broadcasting in English, often do not agree with the decision to curtail the English language service at a time when English is the global *lingua franca* and when other nations are turning to English for their international broadcasts.

- Training: Interlocutors repeatedly reported that training opportunities in VOA have been limited in terms of scope and availability compared to other government agencies. The OIG team found that training does take place but is restricted by funding limitations and perhaps not sufficiently made part of a coordinated career development plan.

- The VOA Style Guide: Many writers and editors complained that the VOA style guide was woefully out of date, predating television and Internet requirements. But the OIG team learned that the style book is present on the office Intranet page and is updated regularly. The OIG team informally recommended to the acting managing editor that an earlier announcement to the staff about this electronic version be repeated and widely displayed.

- Hiring Practices: The OIG team heard repeated comments that there needs to be more transparency in hiring. The staff worry that management prefers to hire from the outside rather than to promote from within. Some long-term employees think that they are discriminated against because of age or longevity. They claim that seniority is not honored and that some of the newly hired or promoted employees are relatively unqualified. Also, sometimes employees have been shifted laterally into GS-13 and GS-14 positions without open competition, which results in accusations of cronyism. These concerns are addressed in the Human Resources (HR) section as are concerns about fairness in the awards program.

- Promotion opportunities. The writers and editors perceive that there are limited opportunities for advancement. They say that career paths are not clear, nor are criteria for promotions. There is an impression that promotions are handed out grudgingly or not at all, and that the evaluation process is flawed.

- Telecommuting: Although IBB's HR office has issued at least one announcement each year on the telecommuting program, the lack of communication within CN has led to the impression that the program was only for a favored few.

- E-2 travel software: Employees who travel described in great detail and had made formal reports about the cumbersomeness of the new vouchering system described in the management section.

All is not negative. The CN staff expressed a number of satisfactions in working for CN. They include practicing one's profession at its highest level, as well as enjoying a good salary and good job security under Civil Service protections. In contrast, private sector media salaries tend to be high for a few and low for everyone else. At CN even recently-hired writers get to choose their stories and shape them for transmission according to their skills.

Most CN staff agree that the appointment of a new VOA Director is an initial step in putting VOA back on course and in restoring the morale of CN. Senior CN employees believe that the new VOA director has rebuilt the firewall and will maintain it. Though they see him as more approachable than his predecessor, they are still uncertain of his intentions toward CN and speak of the need to have more direct contract with him.

Central News Relations with Language Services

Many of the staff have worked for VOA for several decades. Their memories go back to the Cold War, when VOA's mission was clearer and its delivery less complicated by technological innovations. In those days, the news was top down and one size fits all. The news division determined what the news was and prepared it for translation and transmission by LS. Today, CN no longer has that degree of control over what is "news" and what are the priorities. This sense of a loss of control is deeply felt by many of the division's most experienced staff.

Many editors expressed concern that LS and the BBG grantee broadcast entities now decide what the news is for different audiences without effective centralized control. They claim that records of which items written by CN are used by LS, "usage logs," are not well kept and thus do not properly document the value of their products.

The usage log is a form of quality control. The CN products have been strictly edited for conformity with VOA editorial standards. The log includes correspondent reports, background pieces, scripts from the Focus unit, and English Programs radio features. The assignments desk and correspondents may check it for ideas about what a particular language service wants. When a CN writer and a stringer in the field both come up with a report on the same topic, there needs to be a way to record multiple originations.

Some language elements have adapted portions taken from the CN products for use in their language service-generated materials without crediting the related central material in the log. An analyst in P/R said that it is not clear how well the log is being used. P/R recommended, in an April 2006 review, that the VOA Associate Director for Language Programming enforce the requirement for LS staff to log usage of all CN products. Without a reliable logging system, internal quality control is at risk.

Accurate log usage is key to proving that the quality-controlled CN product is being used. The OIG team supports the recommendation of P/R that a television news log also be established. A more user-friendly log with clear guidelines as to how to register origination of reports would be an important tool for CN, LS, and overseas writers.

Recommendation 17: The Voice of America should create a more user-friendly log to record Central News material used by the Language Service and clear guidelines on how to use the log and how the Language Services should record the origin of reports originally created by Central News. (Action: VOA)

Some editors also feel that annual LS program reviews are incomplete in showing the quantity or quality of the use of CN products by a given language service. Even if the differences in presentation and emphasis among the language services are insignificant, these news room veterans argue that broadcasts are not being accurately monitored for content. They do not ask that CN be the monitor but suggest that monitoring should be an executive function carried out by an office above the CN director.

Many of the writers and editors on "the floor" of the news room report that they have no interaction with the language service staffers. Among them, one hears critical comments about the growth of certain favored language services, which they perceive to be at the expense of CN. But one finds a different attitude on the assignments desk, which does work closely with LS. Questions from LS are often technical and require advice from CN production specialists. Sometimes the language services seek clarification on the content of a report for translation purposes. Assignments editors and the language services offer each other information and suggestions. When coverage is coordinated, the language service and CN help each other out at interviews, sharing technology where possible.

The Washington "beat" correspondents reported that they try to help out the LS reporters when they can, although this is not strictly a part of their duties. For example, if a VOA White House correspondent knows that a head of state will be at the White House, the correspondent, as professional courtesy, will provide the relevant language service a tape of the interview in the original language. Some protocol for reporters, especially at the White House, is strictly structured. A CN manager said that some LS people do not know these protocols and are nervous, although the problem has lessened over the last few years as the LS journalists have become more experienced.

Recommendation 18: Voice of America should require Language Service journalists covering a news event at the White House, the Pentagon, the Department of State, or in Congress to alert the Voice of America Central News correspondent assigned responsibility for that location. (Action: VOA)

Washington correspondents that cover the Congress, the White House, the Department, and the Pentagon, said they could be more helpful to their LS colleagues if the language services understood how the correspondents operated. Many of the news correspondents have been in their positions for a long time and have valuable experience that could be used by the language services and could prevent duplication. The OIG team informally recommended that CN conduct an orientation for LS journalists describing protocol, both formal and informal, for covering news at the White House, the Pentagon, the Department of State, and in Congress.

CN staff commented on their concern that the language services keep up the quality and integrity of the VOA product. BBG's implementation strategy for its 2008-2013 Strategic Plan states that "Credibility is key to success in broadcasting, and it is our greatest asset." P/R has found that the output, standards, and overall production of the CN remain high in spite of managerial and administrative challenges. To ensure quality in its products, CN has a traditional process of editorial review and written criteria. The VOA Charter[9] serves as a guideline: "VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive." The regularly updated VOA Style Book is on every VOA computer (although as reported above, many on the staff deny knowing how to find it).

CN produces a daily news report and advisories via the NEB wire that is available to all VOA elements. This report includes advisories of what CN plans to cover on a daily basis as well as details of the news coverage itself. Every two hours, the duty editor in charge updates a list of the top 10 stories of the Central News file. This does not include the correspondents' reports or background reports. In the past, the language services were required to translate and use all of the stories. More recently, as language services produce more of their own material, they are generally required to use the top one or two. According to the assignments desk chief, some stories are "must use," such as presidential speeches, congressional reaction to

[9]Public Law 94-350.

an important issue, or the war in Iraq. There was considerable debate by the correspondents and managers about the need for clear written guidance on what news LS should be required to use. The OIG team informally recommended that the Director of VOA prepare and disseminate clear guidance to the language services on what products they are required to use from the CN NEB wire.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

CN had a general operating budget of about $ 9 million in FY 2007 and currently has 207 positions in Washington, its domestic bureaus, and its overseas bureaus. Central News employees also utilize noncapitalized personal property valued at about $2,000,000 in 2007, not including the property of the Central Video Unit, which was reassessing its holdings. The following chart shows the number of personnel and funding in CN locations. Attachment D shows a more detailed breakdown of funding by section and bureau.

Budget and Staffing – FY 2007	American Direct Hires/Locally Employed Staff	Funding – General Op. Expenses	Funding - Salaries	Total Funding
VOA Central News Washington	148	4,626,399	15,681,000	20,307,399
VOA Domestic Bureaus	8	105,608	883,302	988,910
VOA Overseas Bureaus/News Centers	20/31	4,497,935	4,177,313	8,675,248
Total	**176/31**	**9,229,942**	**20,741,615**	**29,971,557**

Note: The budget figures above and in Attachment D do not reflect all of the costs associated with CN operations and cannot therefore be used alone to analyze the cost of operations.

Administrative Support

For the last 10 years, CN employees and contractors have received the bulk of their administrative support from a GM-14 administrative program manager, three administrative officers, and a secretary. Although a number of other offices (such as the IBB Office of Human Resources, the IBB Office of Contracts, and the BBG CFO's office) also provide CN staff support, CN staff generally take administrative questions and requests first to the CN administrative unit. The CN administrative unit also provides services to offices outside of CN including the services to LS.

OIG found that the CN administrative unit has performed its routine functions well; needed services, supplies, and equipment were generally provided; payments made in a timely manner, funds tracked, and files in good order. Individuals in offices outside of CN (including the BBG CFO's office, the IBB Front office, the IBB Office of Contracts, and the VOA Director's office) also gave the CN administrative section excellent marks for routine operations and indicated that they often went to the head of the section when they had questions. The employees are trained and experienced in their current responsibilities. The administrative unit received mixed reviews, however, from its customers.

Central News Customer Support – Programmatic Control

Many CN customers thought the administrative unit – the administrative program manager in particular – wielded too much control over CN operations and that the administrative unit, rather than the managing editor, controlled CN bureau and branch funding, and to some extent personnel. The OIG team found that a series of managing editors had placed a great deal of confidence in the administrative program manager and her unit and allowed them wide latitude in influencing, and often making, resource-related decisions. The administrative program manager sits on CN promotion panels, and she usually initiates budget reallocations. Units outside of CN also rely on the administrative program manager. Until January 2007, the CFO's office processed CN resource reallocations and budget submissions that had been signed off on by the administrative program manager or the administrative officers rather than the managing editor. Additionally, HR has posted vacancy announcements with no evidence of the managing editor's approval. The administrative program manager's position description from 1993-2004 gave her a great deal of authority and responsibility for resource decisions,[10] though her most recent position description is either less prescriptive or draws back some of those responsibilities.[11]

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[10]The administrative program manager's position description from 1993-2004 described her as the "Chief Executive Officer" for VOA News whose duties included "full authority to exercise direction over all personnel of the division, and is responsible for the recruitment and effective utilization of all News Division personnel…The incumbent has interchangeable status with the Division Chief and is regarded as competent to represent the VOA/X Division to high-ranking officials both within and outside the agency…maintains close supervision of all correspondents and of domestic news bureau personnel… assists in the selection and assignment of VOA correspondents."

[11] The program manager's current positions description states "As Deputy for Management, the incumbent has the responsibility for all directorate administrative matters. Included in these tasks are personnel management, financial planning, training, program review, and management and requisition of purchase order talent…performs or directs the performance of continuous appraisal of all resources in accomplishing program objectives and goals."

Although the program manager asserts that major decisions made by her unit are cleared by the managing editor, the OIG team found that decisions are often disseminated by the administrative program manager or administrative officers fueling perceptions that the unit controls resources. The administrative program manager and the managing editor agreed that resource-related or controversial decisions should be circulated by the managing editor rather than the administrative unit staff.

Recommendation 19: The Voice of America, in coordination with the Broadcasting Board of Governor's Chief Financial Officer and the International Broadcasting Bureau's Office of Human Resources, should institute procedures to ensure that controversial or resource-related Central News decisions are not disseminated to staff or outside entities until written approval has been given by the Central News managing editor. (Action: VOA, in coordination with the BBG/CFO and IBB)

Budget Transparency Within Central News

A number of CN staff reported that budget decisions were not transparent, and they were unsure of the status of their budgets. As was noted in the discussion of internal communication above, budget decisions are often made by Governors of the BBG, the BBG's CFO, or the VOA Director's immediate staff without CN's input and without the results being shared with CN. The CFO did inform the OIG team that her office has offered training to VOA staff on the budget process – though specific budgetary decisions are not covered. In addition, the OIG team found that, although each of the five CN units do have a budget, administrative staff do not hold regular meetings with CN section heads to go over spending rates and the level of funds available. Formal meetings would improve budget transparency and ensure that administrative staff is kept aware of and can anticipate its customer's needs.

Recommendation 20: The Voice of America should establish a process for regular communication between Central Programming's administrative officers and the heads of the Central News Division's five Washington-based units, and between the administrative officers and the domestic and overseas bureau correspondents to discuss the status of budgets and upcoming needs. This could take the form of monthly meetings, conference calls, video conferences or any of many available options. (Action: VOA)

Allegations of Favoritism in Timeliness and Quality of Support

The OIG team received many reports of favoritism and a disparity in the timeliness and quality of support provided by the administrative unit. For example, the administrative program manager coordinated regularly with some correspondents and managers, but did not respond when others had questions. There were indications that the administrative section did not process all travel vouchers in an equally timely fashion. The absence of performance standards in both VOA and IBB made it difficult for the OIG team to evaluate the quality of support. The CN administrative unit, for example, does not have a performance standard for the length of time to complete its portion of the travel voucher process that starts after the traveler signs and submits the voucher. Additionally, many employees do not understand what functions the CN administrative unit is responsible for as compared to the other IBB administrative units. Therefore, CN administration is often blamed for the failures of others.

Although IBB conducted customer surveys to gauge customer satisfaction with administrative services in 2003 and 2004, more current information would be helpful and could be used to establish administrative efficiency measures. These tools are being employed in other agencies to measure unit performance and to compare that performance to that of other agencies or contractors who also provide services. Customer surveys are administered every year at embassies to gauge agency satisfaction with Department-provided services and the results are used to evaluate the performance of the embassy's management officer. The lack of an updated MOA and standard operating procedures, discussed in the management controls section, added to the impression of partiality on the part of CN administrative management.

Recommendation 21: The Voice of America Office of Central Programming, Central News Division, should describe the services and processes that it is responsible for, establish performance standards related to each service or process, distribute the standards to Central News customers, post the service description and standards on its public bulletin board, and include standards of performance in work requirements descriptions of administrative positions. (Action: VOA)

Administrative Section Brain Drain

During the inspection, the VOA Director reassigned the CN GM-14 administrative program manager to the LS West and South Asia Division where the rapidly expanded Persian language service was experiencing management problems. The administrative program manager was notified of the decision on a Friday and reassigned – effective immediately – on the following Monday. Neither the administrative program manager, nor the acting CN managing editor knew of the planned reassignment before that day. The VOA Director told the OIG team that he transferred the administrative program manager because of the growing importance and funding of the Persian service and because administrative staff in that bureau needed assistance. Although, from VOA's perspective, the move was necessary, CN has been left without its most competent and experienced administrative manager: one who supervised all CN administrative unit staff including staff in overseas finance centers; signed, as the contracting officer, 90 percent of CN's procurements; served as the primary interface with the CN managing editor; and held numerous other responsibilities. Although the remaining staff are working to keep the division afloat, they are not trained to handle all aspects of work performed by this GM-14. Combined with the fact described earlier in this report that CN managing editors have traditionally ceded virtually all administrative decisions to this employee, this? will leave the CN unit – especially overseas operations – at a serious disadvantage.

Recommendation 22: The Voice of America should develop a transition plan for the reassignment of the Central News administrative program manager's Central News responsibilities. (Action: VOA)

Costly Decisions Not Fully Vetted

Decisions that could commit VOA to substantial expenses often seem to be made without fully vetting the costs or long-term implications. Changes to CN's Hong Kong and London operations, purchases related to the shift from radio to television, and CN's recent plan to move financial operations from Paris to London are all examples.

London and Hong Kong

As discussed above, when VOA moved two of its editors from London to Washington, it left VOA with excess leased space in London. IBB had signed a restrictive 15-year lease with no diplomatic release clause. The OIG team was told that the Persian service is partially funding an expansion of TV infrastructure in London and also that CN plans to move its finance center from Paris to London, thus VOA would not necessarily need to turn excess space back to the landlord, break the lease, or try to find a replacement tenant. At the same time, however, the OIG team was told that BBG's FY 2008 budget submission includes program decreases of $606,358 (including $200,000 for office lease costs, $65,058 for utilities and telephones, and $341,300 for elimination of four Foreign Service nationals) for moving its London correspondent to shared Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty facilities in Prague. During the draft review process, the CFO's office informed the OIG team that neither of these proposals had been approved by the board.

Similarly, Hong Kong operational decisions do not appear to have been fully vetted, communicated, or properly executed. VOA's expansion of its Hong Kong operations and use of contract staff was a source of considerable controversy in VOA. Further, the cost benefit analysis was flawed. In fall of 2005, VOA and IBB/Contracts conducted an A-76 Streamlined Competition[12] to compare the cost of filing the CN wire using five full-time employees at VOA headquarters during overnight hours, with the estimated contract price for performing the activity with a private sector source in Hong Kong. Most CN staff were unaware of this competition. The result showed that using contractors to provide news writing services was cheaper and could save VOA at least $300,000 per year.

However, as indicated above, the analysis was flawed as VOA was not able to hire contractors at the rates shown in the comparison. VOA was, however, able to hire a few staff and started performing the function. In its January 2006 expenditure plan,[13] submitted to the House and Senate committees on Appropriations, BBG stated that it planned to draw down the news-writing function in Washington and add five contractor positions to the Hong Kong bureau to enhance its product and

[12] A-76 Streamlined Competitions are discussed in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-76.
[13] Under the FY 2006 Science, State, Justice, Commerce and Related Agencies Appropriations Act

save $1.1 million over five years. In April 2006, the House Committee on Appropriations responded that the Committee "does not support this request at this time and will consider this proposal in our review of the President's Fiscal Year 2007 request." BBG's 2007 request was never approved or disapproved. Nevertheless, CN had already started to implement the plan and hire contractors in Hong Kong.

In February 2007, CN managers were provided a document entitled "Bureau Sharing Options" that described a number of proposed FY 2008 cutbacks. (The cutbacks in this document totaled $2.5 million.) The proposed cutbacks included cost savings of $1.18 million for colocating VOA's Hong Kong operations with RFA using excess space created by closing VOA's editing operations and retaining only two American reporters from the Chinese language service and cutting RFA's Cantonese operations. VOA administrative staff and managers reported to the OIG team that they were not involved in developing the cost savings figure and responded, after the fact, that that figure did not take into account the anticipated severance costs (to be funded from the locally employed staff liability account) or costs to dismantle two radio studios, one TV studio, two intake centers, the IT server room and the technicians' maintenance center, or to restore the property to its original condition as required in the lease. Further, according to CN staff, the cost saving figure did not address the infrastructure and staff needed in Washington to pick up the Hong Kong functions. According to the CFO, BBG's FY 2008 budget included cost savings of $885,302 for colocating VOA's Hong Kong bureau with RFA's Hong Kong bureau.

The OIG team was not able to get to the bottom of all of the facts surrounding the Hong Kong operation and the contradictory decisions in recent years, first to expand, then to contract, the editing function. But the inspection did reveal the disconnect between the CFO's office, the VOA Director's office, and CN staff that has created unnecessary work, cost BBG scarce funds, and had a negative impact on morale in both CN Washington and Hong Kong.

Paris Finance Center

VOA maintains two finance centers overseas, one in Bangkok and the other in Paris. The finance centers were originally placed in Bangkok and Paris because State Department payment centers, used to process VOA payments, were located in those cities. Each VOA finance center has three locally employed staff employees who establish obligations and certify payments for overseas bureau payments in their region. During the inspection, the OIG team was informed that CN was planning to relocate its Paris finance center to London. The impetus for the move was apparently an increase in the Paris finance center's rent. The finance center occupies Department of State space and VOA's portion of the rental costs recently increased. The CFO's

office, not CN, centrally funds all BBG International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) costs which include the Paris Finance Center's rent.

Questions as to why VOA continued to support its Paris finance center first arose years ago when the State Department closed its Paris finance center and moved operations to Charleston, South Carolina and when the Department opened its Frankfurt regional service center. BBG successfully argued at that time for keeping the CN finance center in Paris.[14] Some of BBG's original reasons are no longer valid. For example, the depth of knowledge and experience of the staff was one of BBG's reasons for keeping the center in Paris. The supervisory locally employed staff and one of the other two staff are currently eligible to retire. Additionally, proximity to VOA bureaus was important in order to facilitate VOA bureau audits, but the Paris finance center has not conducted a bureau audit since 2005 due to lack of funding.

CN provided the OIG team a number of justifications for moving the center from Paris to London including the following:

- VOA's London bureau has extra space so CN lease costs would not increase;
- An alternate certifying officer already resides in London;
- At least one of the finance center employees may want to relocate to London and would provide beneficial continuity;
- The center should be located in the same time zone as the overseas bureaus serviced;
- Neither CN nor the CFO's office had access to the overseas financial systems or staff or expertise to take over the function;
- Commercial mail delivery services in the United States will not deliver checks to vendors with vague or incomplete foreign addresses (particularly in Africa) while carriers in Paris (and possibly London) would;

[14] According to an unsigned soft-copy letter to OMB, BBG's reasons for keeping the center in Paris included: the depth of knowledge and experience of the staff; the geographic and time-zone proximity to VOA bureaus to facilitate landlord and stringer payments and audits of VOA bureau operations; and French language proficiency for dealing with vendors in VOA bureaus in French-speaking countries.

- Sending foreign currency checks from Charleston through Washington rather than through Paris (or possibly London) would increase the length of time to make overseas payments; and

- Sending invoices from overseas bureaus to Washington, DC will take longer than sending the documents from the bureaus to Paris or London.

CN, however, did not fully vet the issues listed above. For example: CN has not reviewed the number and nature of communications between the Paris finance center and VOA bureaus to determine how important physical proximity to VOA bureaus really is and whether BBG accountants and certification officers in Washington or Charleston could adjust work schedules to provide adequate coverage – the Department, for example, mans its finance center 24 hours a day.[15] CN has not contacted Charleston to determine if foreign currency check mailings to Washington can be expedited. Additionally, CN did not conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine if the function could be moved to or absorbed by existing BBG staff in Washington or Charleston at a lower cost than moving the function to London. Over the last few years, the Paris finance center's workload has diminished and it is questionable whether all of the staff are fully employed. CN's three-person finance center costs almost $500,000, the majority of which is for office space, embassy guard services, salaries, and benefits.

VOA had not adequately considered whether it could outsource the overseas accounting and certification functions to other agencies rather than performing the functions with BBG staff. Although the Paris and Bangkok certification officers are well versed in BBG's overseas accounting system (the same system used by the Department for overseas operations) and those officers regularly communicate with Department accounting certification officers who receive periodic training and guidance on overseas guidelines and systems, VOA administrative staff told inspectors that only a few staff in BBG in the CFO's office are familiar with the overseas systems, regulations and requirements and most of them are nearing retirement. During the inspection one such key officer in the CFO's office left. CFO staff did not have

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[15] CN staff may be able to provide overseas accounting services and BBG/CFO staff overseas certification services. In response to seeing a draft of this report, the CFO staff stated that they do not currently have access to the overseas accounting system. At an annual financial management conference, the Director of Financial Operations discussed the possibility of providing BBG with direct access to LANSPFMS and RFMS with the Department. The Department stated that it was not ready to provide this access. If the Department agreed to provide direct access, the BBG Payment Office could enter payments directly into the overseas system, thus eliminating the need for the Paris Office or moving this function to the London Bureau.

access to the overseas accounting system. The CN program manager was viewed by many VOA overseas staff as the overseas operations expert; though she admitted she did not know all of the requirements and that dealing with overseas operations was a constant learning challenge.

The OIG team was informed that because VOA correspondents do not have diplomatic status, they cannot be serviced by embassies. BBG and the Department should reexamine the above policy as it relates to mundane administrative functions to allow, for example, obtaining accounting or certification functions through ICASS overseas. State cable 96188 (April 14, 2003), addresses access that all BBG overseas staff have to ICASS. Alternatively, VOA could obtain certification services from the Department's Financial Service Center in Charleston.

During the draft report review process, the CFO office stated that CN's plan to move the finance center from Paris to London had not been approved by the Board.

Recommendation 23: The Voice of America, in coordination with the Broadcasting Board of Governors, should conduct a cost benefit analysis to determine the best location for its overseas accounting and certification functions, and design and implement a plan to relocate those functions based on the results of the analysis. (Action: VOA, in coordination with BBG)

The cost benefit analysis should address whether VOA and/or BBG staff can provide accounting and certification functions from Washington DC or a lower cost location overseas and whether the cost of outsourcing accounting and/or certification services would be more economical that providing such services via Voice of America or Chief Financial Officer direct-hire staff.

Recommendation 24: The Voice of America, in coordination with the Broadcasting Board of Governors' Chief Financial Officer, should relocate accounting and certification functions to the domestic or overseas location determined to be the most cost effective by the cost benefit analysis. (Action: VOA, in coordination with the BBG CFO)

Other Administrative Sources

VOA could also benefit from obtaining administrative support or, at least, advice from other foreign affairs agencies or contractors in other administrative areas. Obtaining assistance from Embassy London's general services officer or from the Department's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (which deals with thousands of overseas leases every year), might have prevented BBG's signing its overly-restrictive 15-year London lease. The OIG team was informed that excess or inoperable equipment is often destroyed by overseas bureau correspondents because the cost of conducting a sale outweighs the potential proceeds. In FY 2006, for example, the Beijing bureau destroyed one copier, three humidifiers, one computer, two printers, two air cleaners, a VCR, a fax machine, and other radio and TV equipment. Other overseas bureaus ship broken or obsolete equipment back to Washington at unnecessary costs.

According to documentation, overseas VOA correspondents do not request embassy or consulate support for property sales, because the correspondents are administratively separated from Department facilities overseas; however, VOA could explore donating the property to the U.S. Embassy because their sales are likely more cost-effective due to volume. This has been raised in a number of reports of inspections of BBG facilities overseas. Assistance from other foreign affairs agencies operating in Hong Kong may have resulted in a more realistic cost-benefit analysis with regard to contractor salaries.

Management controls could also improve by looking to other agencies or contractors for administrative support or advice. Overseas correspondents reported that they did not receive adequate procurement or financial management training before traveling overseas (as discussed further in the procurement section). Many also noted that IBB/Contracts, HR, and CFO had not been supportive and often did not understand the realities of operating overseas so they relied on the CN's administrative program manager for support. The OIG team received a few allegations of missing equipment pertaining to overseas operations. While the OIG team was not able to address all of the overseas issues raised during the inspection, the OIG team informally recommended that VOA conduct cost-benefit analyses to determine if real property, HR, and contracting support could be obtained outside of BBG for better results. As stated in Recommendation 5, VOA needs a sustainable and transparent plan for the support of each of the VOA's overseas operations, to include the implementation of effective internal controls mechanisms.

Voice of America Administrative Support Structure, Disjointed and Shortsighted

The CN administrative unit – primarily the former CN program manager – provided administrative support services to a number of offices outside of CN. The CN program manager served as the contracting officer for two LS divisions, signing 90 percent of their procurements. She also managed, as the primary authorized representative of the contracting officer (ARCO), BBG's four major newswire contracts (used by CN, LS, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, and Radio Free Europe). The program manager also supervised staff at CN's two overseas finance centers that provide accounting support to LS operations overseas. Although these non-CN-related responsibilities often entailed a significant amount of effort, none of the responsibilities were mentioned in either the program manager's or any of the CN administrative staffs' position descriptions or work requirements statements. Additionally, none of the non-CN-entities have input to the ratings of any of the CN administrative staff. The arrangements are disjointed and have resulted in substandard administrative support to non-CN entities and have placed an extra workload on the CN administrative staff.

Responsibilities gravitated toward the CN administrative staff because the CN staff enjoy a reputation in VOA and IBB for being competent, and because neither LS nor the IBB have been willing or able to take on the responsibilities or fill needed positions. Many of VOA's key administrative staff members are retiring or near retirement. Because the administrative support structure in VOA is relatively flat – with each language service maintaining its own administrative officers – the retirement of one officer or elimination of one position can seriously cripple a service's operations. Newly hired administrative officers may report directly to LS division chiefs, who rarely come from a management background, or other inexperienced administrative officers. This situation and the administrative structure have already created problems.

A senior VOA manager described the situation as an "administrative crisis." IBB Office of Contract staff and CFO staff are concerned about unauthorized commitments and the potential for Antideficiency Act violations. Before her reassignment, the CN program manager had to ratify 26 payments, two totaling about $40,000 each, occurring in different language service offices since December 2005, generally because stringers were conducting work without valid contracts or obligations in place.[16] In the context of CN inspection interviews, LS section heads expressed concern about their own administrative operations. The OIG team also received phone calls from LS stringers who were concerned that their payments were late. One overseas CN correspondent in a dangerous location was particularly concerned. Stringers, whom he and various language services relied on for reporting and for security awareness, had not been paid in four months for services provided to a language service. If they lost patience, he and his LS colleagues could be quite vulnerable.

Although the OIG team is not inspecting all of VOA, the impact that the disjointed administrative structure has had on CN operations and the number and severity of comments the OIG team received about administrative operations – primarily among the language services – is cause for concern. Budgetary pressures and changing priorities are likely to continue and may result in further reduced training funds for administrative staff. The absence of central authority or guidance, the uneven skill levels among the administrative staffs of different offices, the lack of familiarity with overseas needs, and the opaque way in which the BBG budget process operates all contribute to this breakdown. VOA, however, does not appear to have a plan to ensure that administrative officers are adequately trained and supervised and that VOA bureaus and divisions are staffed with an appropriate number of administrative officers. The OIG team noted models in which a centralized administrative authority could better lead and distribute responsibilities.

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[16] The ratification process serves to reprimand employees who either commit U.S. government resources without having authority to do so, or who commit resources without first ensuring that valid obligations and/or funding are in place (putting the agency at risk of being antideficient).

Recommendation 25: The Voice of America should develop and implement a plan to: ensure adherence to U.S. government regulations; ensure that administrative officers receive adequate training and supervision from trained and seasoned administrative staff; allow bureau administrative staff to back each other up when workload changes or staff are in training; and, facilitate the redistribution of administrative staff when programmatic priorities shift between bureaus. (Action: VOA)

Towards the end of the inspection period, the OIG team was informed that VOA had recently advertised a GS-15 Resource Manager position for its front office that may have oversight responsibilities with regard to the VOA administrative officers. While this is a step in the right direction, the OIG team believes centralizing the support in one office (such as the VOA front office) rather than having partial oversight from the front office, would be a better long term solution in that it allows administrative staff to back each other up and allows frequent contact between seasoned and new VOA administrative staff. The OIG team was also told that VOA has been working with HR to establish a recruitment and retention strategy and a training plan for staff engaged in administrative support activities. However, the plan has been in the works for over a year, and it is questionable whether sufficient funding has been identified. The OIG team informally recommended that VOA, in coordination with HR, identify and set aside sufficient funds for recruitment and training of its administrative staff. The OIG team was encouraged by the draft planning documents (that include standardized position descriptions and performance standards) and suggested training courses. An informal recommendation was made that VOA consider separating administrative duties by function (such as financial management, human resource, procurement), similar to those used at other agencies, to facilitate recruitment and development of technical expertise.

After the inspection had ended, the OIG team was informed that beginning in February 2006, the Office of Contracts had held numerous meetings with technical personnel to improve controls over unauthorized commitments. However, unauthorized commitments did occur after this date, which may indicate that in addition to technical personnel, other VOA staff may need training.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The IBB Office of Civil Rights (OCR) is responsible for ensuring that EEO policies are fostered at IBB. OCR serves as a means to redress complaints. According to OCR, in the last four years only two of the 148 Washington-based CN employees have initiated formal complaints, and both of the complaints were resolved. At the time of the inspection, there were no outstanding formal complaints. The Director of OCR emphasized, however, that many IBB employees come to her to describe potential problems and to learn what their options are. Clearly, the vast majority do not initiate a formal complaint. One reason for this may be a perception that the employee would not get a satisfactory resolution from OCR. The OIG team learned in the course of employee interviews and questionnaires that many VOA employees fear retribution by supervisors should they bring a complaint. OCR is aware of this and is concerned.

All managers and supervisors are required to attend EEO training, which is funded by, and conducted by OCR. Despite this availability of EEO training, the OIG team heard a wide range of EEO-related complaints. There is a need for broader-based training for all employees on EEO principles, promotion of diversity, and what to do if one is subjected to discrimination, with a clear emphasis on ensuring that all employees actually attend the training. The OIG team informally recommended OCR develop a program to remind all employees of the application of EEO principles. Participation in the program should be directed from the VOA Front Office through all levels of management. The program could include town hall meetings to emphasize management's commitment to these principles followed by a series of training sessions. The training sessions should be practical, including case studies, clearly addressing employees' rights and responsibilities, describing how OCR may be able to assist them (stressing the need for documentation); and, providing an avenue to answer questions. Other agencies have found that there is often a resistance to such programs by experienced managers that can only be overcome by tying these concepts of leadership to the managers' professional evaluations.

Recommendation 26: Voice of America management should make adherence to Equal Employment Opportunity concerns and leadership training a part of all supervisors' performance plans and their annual assessment ratings. (Action: VOA)

Travel

The OIG team reviewed business class travel by CN employees with the IBB Office of Financial Operations and found that all observed instances of business class travel followed IBB travel policy correctly.

Several CN employees who had lost their U.S. government credit cards (due to late payment or other processing difficulties) were not able to obtain travel advances, and therefore had to fund official travel personally. IBB policy does not currently allow travel advances when the traveler has lost use of his or her U.S. government credit card. Exceptions, however, can be requested in writing by the individual's supervisor and will be approved on a case-by-case basis. The OIG team informally recommended that IBB consider making the travel advance policy less draconian and allowing travel advances for infrequent travelers or for travel of lengthy duration as long as the advances are properly handled and paid back in a timely manner. OIG also informally recommended that IBB publicize the travel advance policy and the process for requesting an exception.

According to the BBG Office of Financial Operations, all IBB employees were offered basic training in the use of the new E-2 travel management system, but not all took advantage of it. A travel center has been established to answer questions and assist travelers. Based on the number of complaints from employees about the E-2 system, however, the OIG team informally recommended that the office of Financial Operations more broadly publicize the CFO Internet site containing Frequently Asked Questions and a PowerPoint training presentation and directly urge travelers to take advantage of the availability of one-on-one E-2 travel system training. (OIG's ability to review the travel area was somewhat impeded by the fact that the chief of the Financial Operations Division and the system administrator for the E-2 travel management system departed their positions during the fieldwork period of this inspection.)

Parking and Security

The parking policy for IBB appears to be dysfunctional, with the conflict between the times when the evening shift begins and ends and when the appropriate parking areas are available for use. This results in hasty handovers to the next shift at the least and, too frequently, work time lost to parking problems. The OIG team informally recommended that VOA request IBB to adjust the parking lot hours of operation to match work shifts of employees.

Security in the post-September 11 world is of preeminent concern, particularly for employees working in federal government buildings. There are many reasons why Voice of America, with its 24/7 operation could attract terrorist or criminal interest. VOA staffers, particularly on the night shift have described guards nodding off or asleep at their posts. The OIG team informally recommended that IBB address these concerns with the Federal Protective Service.

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The OIG team found that management controls within CN for routine administrative operations were good overall; however, controls over programmatic decisions and overseas operations need to improve. The absence of up-to-date guidelines, standard operating procedures, and position descriptions has been a detriment to effective controls. Additionally, the transfer of the CN program manager (discussed above) and pending retirement of key IBB personnel will erode existing CN management controls. Finally, CN's internal management controls assessment was not complete.

The OIG team found the administrative section at a disadvantage because both CN and IBB lack up-to-date guidance in certain areas. IBB's MOA was not up to date and few standard operating procedures exist. Sections of the MOA refer at length to the support embassy financial and general service officers provide, though overseas bureau correspondents have not used embassy officers for accounting, certification, or procurement functions for years. The MOA also refers to Department financial reports that were replaced years ago. The absence of codified financial management procedures was identified as a "reportable condition" by OIG's independent auditor in its audit of BBG's FY 2005 and FY 2006 financial statements.[17] Although BBG's FY 2005 and 2006 Performance and Accountability reports seemed to demonstrate progress,[18] during the inspection the OIG team was informed that seven of 11 CFO sections are completed but not yet posted, two are still in the clearance process, and the other two sections – on travel and payments – are still being rewritten. The head of the CFO's Payments Section (who took another job during

[17]Under standards issued by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, reportable conditions are matters related to significant deficiencies in the design or operation of internal control that could adversely affect BBG's ability to record, process, summarize and report financial data consistent with the assertions of management in its financial statements.

[18] In its FY 2005 Report, BBG noted that "in FY 2004, the agency began updating its MOA. The first policies and procedures that were updated were for the CFO's office. A draft of the CFO section has been completed and is currently under review and clearance. The final section is scheduled to be finalized by December 31, 2005." In its FY 2006 Report, BBG noted that "The CFO components of the MOA have been drafted, are being formatted to fit the current MOA model, and are under review by General Counsel."

the inspection) said that her section did not have adequate resources this year to fulfill their routine functions, establish a travel office, and research and incorporate all Government Accountability Office regulation changes occurring since 1987 into the IBB MOA.

Recommendation 27: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should identify and request the resources needed to complete the finance-related sections of the Manual of Operations and Administration and develop a realistic schedule for completing the sections. (Action: BBG CFO)

Recommendation 28: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should complete and post the finance-related sections of the Manual of Operations and Administration. (Action: BBG)

In accordance with the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act of 1982 and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-123 "Management Responsibility for Internal Controls," revised 2006, BBG must conduct a management assessment of the effectiveness of its internal controls every year. To comply with the requirement, IBB distributes a self-assessment checklist to each major BBG/IBB manager, including one to the VOA Director's office, for completion. The VOA Director's office, in turn, distributes the checklist to its constituent divisions, to include CN. In its FY 2006 Statement of Assurance, CN (Central Programming at the time) reported that the results of the review indicated that there was a reasonable assurance that internal and management controls were working effectively and the program and administrative functions were performed in an economical and efficient manner.

However, neither CN, nor the VOA Director's staff, could locate the underlying self-assessment checklists, as required in IBB guidance, calling into question how and whether the checklists were actually completed. Checklists include questions such as: "Does the section have clearly stated and current (not older than five years) policies, procedures, organizational structures, and systematically organized delegations that are appropriately distributed by management and accompanied by training?"; "Do all employees have a performance appraisal plan with performance measures?"; "Did all employees receive a performance rating?"; "Does the office periodically check accountable items by physical inventory?"; "Does the office have controls that prevent

incurring obligations in excess of funds available within a budget category?" In addition, the 2006 checklist was signed by the (former) CN Program Manager rather than the head of CN (Central Programming at the time). Management control reviews are meant to be more than administrative exercises. They should address both administrative and programmatic controls and therefore should be signed by the head of the operating unit. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that both CN and VOA maintain documentation supporting its self-assessments as required. In July 2007, the acting managing editor was issued and did sign an internal controls assessment. This has not been a regular procedure for VOA.

Recommendation 29: The Voice of America should require the head of the Central News Division to sign the Central News Division's annual internal controls assessment. (Action: VOA)

VOA's overall statements of assurance from FY 2005 and FY 2006 similarly reported no weaknesses. The OIG team was able to review VOA's supporting assessment checklists, though the checklists did not appear complete. For example, VOA only completed the "Generic Questions" section of the checklist and not the "Specific Functional" sections on Human Resources, Financial Management, Procurement/Contract Management, Travel, Property Management, and Information Technology. Although other IBB offices have broader responsibilities in these specific functional areas, VOA managers and administrative staff are responsible for a number of important controls mentioned in those sections. For example, accountable property officers within CN are responsible for conducting physical inventories every year and reporting the results to IBB.

VOA assignments staff must ensure that administrative officers have established valid obligations with funding before using stringers or contractors' services or products. Additionally, in the completed assessment section, VOA explanations referred to the "VOA front office" rather than VOA as a whole. For example, to the question, "Does the area have trained and competent personnel to properly manage and perform the activity?" VOA stated that "All VOA front office employees are trained and competent to perform their duties." The self assessment checklists are opportunities for VOA to identify problems areas or request support or resources. The OIG team made informal recommendations that VOA complete all relevant questions in the checklist and ensure that its submission reflects an assessment of all VOA operations, not only those of the VOA front office. Additionally, because written assessment instructions do not appear to have resulted in complete VOA assessments for the last two years, more oversight and guidance is needed.

Recommendation 30: The International Broadcasting Bureau should write and implement a policy requiring its Office of Administration to meet with all International Broadcasting Bureau division heads, including the Voice of America Director, before each years' assessments are due to explain each unit's responsibilities, provide examples of problems to report on, and to answer questions. (Action: IBB/Administration)

The CN program manager supervises certification officers overseas and theoretically could pressure those officers into certifying payments for procurements that she herself had signed. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that VOA establish a control to insulate overseas certification officers from this potential pressure such as having overseas certification officers report to someone other than CN's warranted contracting officer.

Human Resources Management

At the time of the inspection, the OIG team was advised that 12 of 176 authorized positions were vacant and in varying stages of being reauthorized, posted, and filled. IBB HR provides the human resources, recruitment, and classification support for CN as well as the rest of IBB. CN administrative staff work closely with HR, providing personnel action requests, helping write position descriptions, working with the Employee Relations Division when there are employee issues, tracking CN qualification tests (used to evaluate candidates) from the scoring editors from the news desk back to HR, and following up on new-hire processing. CN administration staff and HR emphasized to the OIG team that they received excellent support and cooperation from each other. The OIG team observed that both were working to provide good support to CN employees; however, the comments from personal questionnaires and interviews with individual clients did not always reflect this.

Position Descriptions and Work Requirements Statements

Many CN employees did not have accurate position descriptions and were not being evaluated against work requirements that actually related to the work they were tasked to perform. The position description is the basis for the work requirements statement, so it should be the focus of attention. HR and VOA management recognized that VOA's position descriptions needed updating and had established a task force to address the issue. Initially, one HR specialist and a VOA subject matter

expert worked to develop a menu of all duties performed. VOA supervisors then updated position descriptions utilizing the menu items. Two HR Classification Specialists were then contracted to review and classify the new duties of VOA's LS and CN divisions. Once this step was completed, the newly classified position descriptions would be returned to the supervisors to assure accuracy and discussion with employees.

In order to plan for pending personnel actions, possibly including RIFs, IBB authorized special funding to review the approximately 950 position descriptions of its two divisions. The review started in March 2007, and is scheduled to be completed by the end of calendar year 2007. However, the focus of the review is intended to ensure that positions which would be impacted by a RIF are reviewed first. Because it is less likely that CN positions will be directly involved, other than through bumping rights, the CN positions would be the last to be reviewed.[19]

In order to ensure that these CN position descriptions do get reviewed and that the reviews are completed by the end of CY 2007, IBB should provide funding for an additional contract HR classification specialist (or the continuation of the existing contractors), preferably one with hands on experience with VOA positions. An experienced VOA classifier is necessary because of the IBB's unique single-agency classification standards and because IBB familiarity will ensure a more productive and contributory effort.

Recommendation 31: The International Broadcasting Bureau should provide funding for an additional contract classifier in its Office of Human Resources to ensure the proper and timely review of Central News Division position descriptions or funding to continue the two existing contractors to complete the Central News Division portion by the end of 2007. (Action: IBB).

[19]While no positions in CN are targeted to be abolished in the potential RIF, employees in CN could be affected should displaced employees who are in a higher tenure group qualify to bump CN employees. CN employees could also be affected if displaced employees with more seniority are able to retreat into a CN position if the position is essentially identical to a position that the displaced employee previously held.

Hiring Process/Filling Positions

A number of CN employees complained about the length of time it takes HR to recruit and fill a vacancy and about the difficulty in getting status reports on pending actions. The OIG team discovered that HR has published, and maintains on its web-page, a comprehensive guide listing the "Steps in the Hiring Process" and explaining the amount of time required for each step. The OIG team informally recommended that HR more aggressively feature this helpful guide and ensure that all CN employees are aware of it.

For every position that becomes vacant, the manager (not HR) must seek BBG exception approval before any action can be taken to fill it. As discussed in the context section, the BBG only meets once a month. Additionally, VOA or IBB management may choose to keep certain positions open, either in anticipation of potential reductions or to promote budget savings. This hiring hold is not readily obvious to the employees and managers involved.

Recommendation 32: The International Broadcasting Bureau should direct the Office of Human Resources to develop a system to provide a periodic status report to managers on the current status of hiring actions. (Action: IBB).

The necessity to seek BBG approval to fill vacant CN positions, the possibility of holds on positions due to management decisions, and widespread complaints from employees about lack of information on hiring actions have demonstrated a need for a creative mechanism to facilitate communication about the status of hiring actions. The OIG team informally recommended that IBB HR look into developing an electronic status board on its web site, where the current status of hiring actions could be easily and quickly obtained.

The OIG team received a number of complaints from CN employees that they did not understand why some positions could be filled without competition and others had to be competed. The OIG team informally suggested that HR publish broadly the policies concerning competition of positions to make it clear to employees when competition is and is not required.

Awards and Employee Recognition

The OIG team received several complaints from CN employees about the lack of transparency of the awards program and questioned why the "favorites" received multiple awards and others received none. In the past three and one-half years, 118 CN employees have received a total of 223 awards. In some cases, the same employees have received numerous awards. The awards appear to be widely distributed among the CN sub-units. The OIG team informally recommended that CN management disseminate more broadly the criteria and eligibility for awards.

More recently, budget constraints have sharply curtailed the awards program. IBB pursues other forms of less costly but meaningful recognition (such as tickets to functions and small commemorative gifts) as a further way of recognizing employee contributions. For the FY 2008 budget, IBB has requested $243,684 for awards programs, which represents an increase of 53 percent over the FY 2007 level.

Training

There is a persistent perception among CN staff, as demonstrated not only in the interviews and questionnaires of this inspection, but also in employee satisfaction surveys and other assessments, that VOA employees are not given training opportunities available to other agencies. The OIG team found that there are training opportunities available, and they are publicized. But attendance is not encouraged, nor is the training part of a career development plan such as is seen in other agencies.

Within IBB, the Office of Civil Rights administers EEO and diversity training using its own budget for this purpose. Most other professional and leadership training is administered by HR. The training office currently consists of five employees, with one vacancy and the realignment of another position expected. Because training has been cut due to budget constraints, professional and leadership training has suffered, even though a newly-minted five-day supervisors' development course, "Foundations of Management for New Supervisors", was developed two years ago. The training office was able to sponsor several sessions during the past two years. HR conducts an abbreviated (four-hour) leadership orientation for all new supervisors, facilitated by the HR division chiefs. Earlier OIG inspection recommendations resulted in a priority being placed on mandatory training for employees involved in contracting and acquisitions, as well as for security specialists to assure full compliance with regulations and policies. Training for the core broadcast mission has remained HR's highest priority with a focus primarily on transitioning from radio to television and the Internet.

For the FY 2008 budget, BBG has included a request to increase its training budget to $644,000, a significant increase over the current $350,000 level, but actually just restoring it to historical levels. If this is approved, the training office plans to expand leadership training, career development training, skill improvement training, and training to improve performance and increase promotion potential. The OIG team informally recommended that HR work to develop a more complete and tailored training plan, and encourage employees to prepare individual development plans that can be facilitated by a new effective range of training courses.

Training records are not held in one place, so it is difficult to monitor who has had what training. IBB has plans to be integrated into the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System, by the end of CY 2008. This will facilitate the tracking of training records and the ability to tailor training programs to the actual needs of the employees. The OIG team informally recommended that IBB HR move forward on that plan.

Assistance and Advice for Employees

Opinions among CN staff interviewed by the OIG team as to whether gender was a factor in promotions are divided, though a number of female employees describe the workplace as sexist and dominated by an "old boys" network. Several writers believe that the reason they have never been promoted to editor is because they are foreign-born and do not speak English with an American accent.

Both male and female CN Division staff members shared with the OIG team comments made within the past 12 months by VOA management officials that would be considered highly inappropriate, but the employees have declined to file formal EEO complaints. With no action taken, the general sense remains that there may be persistent sexism in the division that limits the opportunities for some employees to advance or simply to feel comfortable in the workplace. Recommendations on EEO issues are made in the Resource Management section above.

The OIG team received numerous complaints from CN employees in the area of discrimination and unequal treatment in certain areas. HR indicated there are three main sources of assistance or advice for employees who have problems. One is the Office of Civil Rights, which can help in cases of discrimination and possible violations of the EEO laws and regulations. The second is the HR Employee Relations Division. They can help in dealing with violations of employment regulations and can work to counsel managers in their responsibilities. Employee relations can also refer employees to (or employees can contact directly) the advisory, referral and counseling service which provides professional counseling and consultation assis-

tance for all employees and their families. Finally, for those employees who are part of the bargaining unit, they can seek assistance from their union representatives.

The OIG team observed that documentation seems to be the sticking point in dealing with these problems. It was apparent that very few potential complainants were taking the time to document the problems they felt they had encountered. Thorough documentation is one of the most important steps the employee can take to obtaining a resolution. Correspondingly, managers and supervisors need to document deficiencies, incidents, or other evidence of poor or inappropriate performance, so that there can be an actionable record. This is addressed above in the EEO section with an informal recommendation.

The position of ombudsman for IBB became vacant in June 2006. There apparently has been no action taken to fill the position. Because this position represents the possibility of providing a grass roots sounding board for management concerns and, given the current state of morale and the dissatisfaction among the rank and file, the OIG team suggested to IBB staff that they consider filling the ombudsman position.

Reductions in Force and Rumors

The OIG team encountered much concern from CN employees about possible RIFs, especially in connection with VOA proposals to reduce or eliminate English news broadcasts. HR informed the OIG team that Congress had not yet approved any RIFs, and noted that it has conducted RIFs, as necessary, for over 10 years and is familiar with best practices in this area. HR staff said they make an intensive effort to inform the union, inform the employees, distribute general notices in advance, and follow up with more specific notices as information is available and final decisions are made. The possibility of current RIFs was announced at a recent town meeting. Concurrently, IBB has been conducting buyout efforts this year to open up positions and reduce the need for actual RIFs.

Metrics and Customer Service Feedback

A few CN employees complained to the OIG team about the service received from HR. The OIG team asked what HR had done to generate and analyze customer service feedback. For the past two years, HR has had every departing employee anonymously complete an exit questionnaire. The results have been tabulated in detail and provide very useful conclusions about reasons for departure, evaluation of the work environment, job satisfaction, etc. HR also surveys management satisfaction with the quality of recruitment efforts via a questionnaire that accompanies

each certificate of candidates. These efforts are encouraging, but the OIG team informally recommended that HR conduct a broad-based, active feedback study of all serviced employees to monitor service provider quality. In addition, HR maintains detailed tracking records and graphs of the time it takes to fill positions. These results, however, are not separated along the lines of the different VOA divisions. CN staff contended that although the averages look good, those divisions that are BBG priorities still appear to receive the best HR services. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that HR separate its results by division.

The OIG team also suggested that IBB/HR compare its servicing ratios (the number of HR specialists per employee) to those at like-sized U.S. government agencies to determine if in-house support is the most cost-effective. Results may show that IBB/HR has a case for requesting additional HR staff from the BBG. USAID, for example, has contracted out its classification function.

CN employees have been participating in focus groups, which the agency contracted with OPM to conduct, as a follow up on the low ranking received by the agency in the 2006 Federal Human Capital Survey. According to HR, OPM is reported to be happy with initial input by the focus groups. Also, a member of the BBG has recently been personally engaged in the agency initiatives to address the survey findings.

Personal Property Management

Personal property operations under the control of the CN administrative unit were adequate; staff generally obtained the equipment needed to perform their functions. Management controls related to the property database, however, need to improve. As with other IBB operations, inventory databases in IBB have been in a state of flux for the last few years, even during the inspection. Three CN employees are property control officers (PCOs), and are responsible for recording and tracking CN property in the Inventory Property Management (IPM) database. A number of CN employees, including overseas bureau chiefs, domestic bureau chiefs, and some domestic correspondents, assume signatory accountability for both capitalized and noncapitalized property in their custodial area and work with the PCOs to keep records up to date.

BBG has historically maintained two property databases, one managed by IBB/E for immobile property such as studio consoles and another, the IPM, managed by IBB/Administration for property such as computers, vehicles, air conditioning units, cameras, and audio recorders. There have been a number of problems with the IPM

database. A CN employee could transfer accountability for a piece of equipment to another employee without the newly-assigned accountable officer's knowledge or physical receipt of the equipment. During an IPM system upgrade, equipment that had been disposed of in the 1970s reappeared on CN inventories. Additionally, the new IPM database crashed a few times, and CN staff had to provide IBB/Administration its cuff records to repopulate the master IPM database. Finally, CN's IPM bar code scanners, used to conduct physical inventories, were inoperable and although physical inventories appear to have been taken in CN's domestic and overseas bureaus, CN did not conduct a physical inventory of its property in Washington, DC in 2006. During the inspection, IBB merged all noncapitalized property from the IPM database into the capitalized property database and started training PCOs on the new database. Given the above-referenced turmoil and the absence of a stable master inventory, the OIG team is concerned about the accuracy of property records.

BBG has recognized and reported on its inventory problems. In both its 2005 and 2006 Performance and Accountability reports, BBG identified its use of multiple property databases and systems as "High Vulnerability Issues." The migration from a seemingly unstable IPM database to the IBB/E database appears to show progress, though the inspection team did not review the planning or pilot tests that IBB may have conducted prior to the current migration.

Recommendation 33: Voice of America should conduct a physical inventory of the Central News Division and reconcile results with both cuff records from the old database and records in the new database. (Action: VOA)

Bureau correspondents were confused about which database certain property, such as teleconferencing equipment, should appear on. According to the CN PCO, under the IBB/E database, all property will be captured in the same database and only one physical inventory conducted each year. This information, however, has not yet been communicated to the bureau correspondents; the OIG team informally recommended that CN request that IBB issue the above guidance to all staff assuming signature accountability for property. Additionally, the CN PCO was responsible for both conducting physical inventories and maintaining inventory records; these responsibilities should be separated. CN reassigned responsibilities for conducting the physical inventory during the inspection. CN also started conducting its physical inventory during the inspection.

Procurement

Procurement operations under the control of the CN administrative unit were adequate, and requests for CN-funded services or equipment were generally provided in a timely manner. The costliest CN-funded domestic procurements were for: newswire access at about $2 million a year; contractors' services; and overseas correspondent travel.

All overseas bureau correspondents have contracting warrants for procurements up to $100,000. A number of the overseas correspondents stated that the procurement training they received before traveling overseas was not adequate. They receive a week-long simplified acquisition course offered to contracting officers federal government-wide. Some also complained that the IBB Office of Contracts was unresponsive and that IBB staff did not understand complexities of operating overseas. Correspondents often directed questions to the (former) CN program manager whom they reported was more responsive. The OIG team suggested that the Office of Contracts tailor overseas correspondent contract training to typical VOA overseas operations. Until that happens, the OIG team made informal recommendations that VOA enroll overseas correspondents in one of the Department Foreign Service Institute's simplified acquisitions courses.

Office of Contracts' staff stated that their policy had been to respond to overseas correspondents' questions within 24 hours. The supervisor who instituted the policy, however, retired in 2005, and it is unclear if the policy stands. None of the CN staff with whom the OIG team spoke were aware of such a response standard or effort to meet it. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the Office of Contracts reinstitute this policy and publish the policy either in the MOA or on the Office of Contracts' webpage. Office of Contracts' staff also stated that often they receive requests – primarily dealing with leases – at the last minute leaving them little time to provide educated advice or adequate reviews. The OIG team suggested that the Office of Contracts disseminate, along with its 24-hour policy, the amount of lead time needed to various contract-related tasks.

The (former) CN program manager serves as the primary ARCO for newswire contracts BBG-wide. In this capacity, she ensures that newswire services are always available by requesting that IBB/Contracts initiate new contract negotiations or exercise options to extend the terms of existing contracts. She also participates in the contract negotiations and she, and CN staff, ensure that both CN and other BBG-entities using the newswire services, have obligated adequate funding for newswire payments. Non-CN bureaus seeking newswire services have not been satisfied with the ARCO's support. They allege that the ARCO prevented their bureaus from

obtaining newswire services and implied that the ARCO and IBB/Contracts could negotiate the newswire contracts more effectively. The ARCO, on the other hand, says that the non-CN bureaus are aware of the options but not willing to fund newswire access. As indicated in the Administrative Structure section above, assigning a program manager within CN (or within any one of the language service divisions) responsibilities for servicing units outside of his/her own is dysfunctional; the primary ARCO responsibility would be best placed in the VOA Director's office. That withstanding, the OIG team found that when the ARCO initiates an option or a new contract, neither she, nor the Office of Contracts, polls all BBG entities to determine if other BBG-entities, such as LS divisions, need newswire services.

Recommendation 34: Voice of America should poll all potential newswire users within the Broadcasting Board of Governors community to ensure all bureaus, grantees, and offices' requirements are considered before exercising newswire contract options or initiating newswire contract negotiations. (Action: VOA)

A number of management controls over newswire access and payments need to be instituted. CN pays a monthly fee to access certain Reuters' newswire services. Although CN ensures that the Reuters' monthly invoice charges match monthly charges agreed to in the Reuters contract, it was unclear from documentation available during this inspection, exactly what services CN was entitled to receive. CN and the IBB Office of Contracts had difficulty finding Attachment A of the Reuters contract which lists all Reuters' services CN has contracted for. Both offices eventually provided the OIG team with a list of Reuters' services; however, the list did not say "Attachment A" or show any other indication that it was part of the official contract or payment file. Additionally, during the field work stage of the inspection, neither CN nor the Office of Contracts were able to locate contract documentation specifying the number of users allowed to access each of the Reuters' newswire services under the contract. Finally, neither the contract nor the payment files included a pricing schedule listing how much each Reuters' service costs. If a newswire service became inoperable, it was unclear how much the invoice should be reduced; similarly, if another office or BBG bureau wanted to add a drop or service, it was not readily apparent how much the cost of the contract would change.

Recommendation 35: The International Broadcasting Bureau, in coordination with Voice of America, should locate and add to its official contract and payment files documentation specifying the services the Central News Division has contracted for, the number of users allowed to access each of those services, and a pricing schedule listing the cost of each of those services. (Action: IBB, in coordination with VOA)

The OIG team also made an informal recommendation that CN compare not only Reuters monthly invoice charges to those in the contract but also compare services billed to services received and those called for in Attachment A of the contract. The OIG team also informally recommended that all newswire contracts specify the individuals who have authority to accept newswire services.

Financial Management

CN administrative unit financial management operations were in order.[20] As indicated above, CN controls about $9 million for domestic and overseas nonsalary operations. Administrative officers in CN monitor domestic CN funds, ensuring that funds are available before obligations are established, matching invoices to obligating documents, obtaining ARCO certification that ordered goods and services were received, and sending invoices either to the CFO's office or one of two CN finance centers overseas for certification and payment. Administrative officers also reconcile CN cuff records with official accounting records monthly and received high marks from the CFO's staff for their work. Year-end spending has not been an issue given CN's limited budget and the fact that BBG has not in the recent past allocated excess funds to CN at the end of the year.

The OIG team also made informal recommendations on: CN's widespread use of blanket travel authorizations and revolving advances; CN's difficulty in monitoring funds available using current accounting system reports; the method and length of time it takes to pay stringers, BBG's cell phone policy, and CN administrative staff overtime.

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[20] Overseas and domestic bureau funds are monitored at one of two overseas finance centers where payments are also certified. OIG did not review overseas bureau financial operations or the domestically managed Home Leave Transfer account.

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Broadcasting Board of Governors, through the International Broadcasting Bureau and Voice of America management, should develop and implement an internal communication strategy, building upon and institutionalizing the briefings begun in May 2007, to introduce the staff to the 2008-13 Strategic Plan and to educate staff members about the structure and roles of the various parts of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. (Action: BBG)

Recommendation 2: Voice of America should require all bidders on the managing editor (Central News Division director) position to demonstrate a strong record of leadership skills and make this criterion an essential factor in the position description requirements. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 3: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should assess training needs, both in professional and managerial skills, and develop a training plan and budget proposal to address documented weaknesses in the Voice of America Central News Division. (Action: BBG)

Recommendation 4: Voice of America should hold the managing editor (Central News Division director) responsible for all administrative and budgetary decisions taken in the Central News Division and accountable for adhering to best management practices. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 5: The Voice of America should develop and implement a sustainable and transparent plan for the support of each of the Voice of America's overseas operations, to include the implementation of effective internal controls mechanisms. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 6: The International Broadcasting Bureau, in coordination with the Voice of America, should resolve the issues of noise and temperature control in the news room. (Action: IBB, in coordination with VOA)

Recommendation 7: The Voice of America should develop and implement standard operating procedures for the Central News Division assignments desk staff to follow in deciding how to prioritize taskings. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 8: The International Broadcasting Bureau should review and revise, if found appropriate, its payment rates for freelance journalists, taking into account international competition and Voice of America's increasing reliance on such journalists for worldwide news coverage. (Action: IBB)

Recommendation 9: The Voice of America should devise and implement both procedural and technological solutions to track news assignments, including television, to avoid redundancy, and to ensure adequate coverage. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 10: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should finalize and disseminate to all parties involved a business plan for the integration of television into its programmatic offerings outlining, at a minimum, the current and future vision and goals, required staffing and budgeting resources, equipment requirements, training plan, and its integration plans with the radio and Internet components. (Action: BBG)

Recommendation 11: The Voice of America should develop and implement procedures based on objective criteria to achieve a transparent process for the allocation of professional camera crews and editing suites. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 12: The Voice of America should clarify and publicize the responsibilities of the Central Video Unit's managers, regularize the lines of supervision, and develop and implement a plan to ensure objective assignment procedures, and assure the continued use of appropriate language and adequate communication by unit management. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 13: The International Broadcasting Bureau should develop and implement a plan to train the Central Video Unit staff in the necessary skills for using NewsFlow productively. (Action: IBB/E, VOA/CC)

Recommendation 14: Voice of America should finalize and disseminate throughout Voice of America, the International Broadcasting Bureau and the Broadcasting Board of Governors a business plan for the Internet component outlining, at a minimum, the current and future vision and goals, required staffing and budgeting resources, equipment requirements, and its integration plans with the radio and television components. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 15: Voice of America, in coordination with the International Broadcasting Bureau, should develop, implement, and enforce a formal policy and procedures for staff requests for information technology equipment purchases and maintenance that assures both VOA division management and information technology approve the request. (Action: VOA, in coordination with the IBB)

Recommendation 16: The Broadcasting Board of Governors, in coordination with the Voice of America, should develop performance measures for the Central News Division and implement procedures to provide reports on usage and outcome (impact) of its radio, television, and Internet products. (Action: BBG, in cooperation with VOA)

Recommendation 17: The Voice of America should create a more user-friendly log to record Central News material used by the Language Service and clear guidelines on how to use the log and how the Language Services should record the origin of reports originally created by Central News. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 18: Voice of America should require Language Service journalists covering a news event at the White House, the Pentagon, the Department of State, or in Congress to alert the Voice of America Central News correspondent assigned responsibility for that location. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 19: The Voice of America, in coordination with the Broadcasting Board of Governor's Chief Financial Officer and the International Broadcasting Bureau's Office of Human Resources, should institute procedures to ensure that controversial or resource-related Central News decisions are not disseminated to staff or outside entities until written approval has been given by the Central News managing editor. (Action: VOA, in coordination with the BBG/CFO and IBB)

Recommendation 20: The Voice of America should establish a process for regular communication between Central Programming's administrative officers and the heads of the Central News Division's five Washington-based units, and between the administrative officers and the domestic and overseas bureau correspondents to discuss the status of budgets and upcoming needs. This could take the form of monthly meetings, conference calls, video conferences or any of many available options. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 21: The Voice of America Office of Central Programming, Central News Division, should describe the services and processes that it is responsible for, establish performance standards related to each service or process, distribute the standards to Central News customers, post the service description and standards on its public bulletin board, and include standards of performance in work requirements descriptions of administrative positions. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 22: The Voice of America should develop a transition plan for the reassignment of the Central News administrative program manager's Central News responsibilities. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 23: The Voice of America, in coordination with the Broadcasting Board of Governors, should conduct a cost benefit analysis to determine the best location for its overseas accounting and certification functions, and design and implement a plan to relocate those functions based on the results of the analysis. (Action: VOA, in coordination with BBG)

Recommendation 24: The Voice of America, in coordination with the Broadcasting Board of Governors' Chief Financial Officer, should relocate accounting and certification functions to the domestic or overseas location determined to be the most cost effective by the cost benefit analysis. (Action: VOA, in coordination with the BBG CFO)

Recommendation 25: The Voice of America should develop and implement a plan to: ensure adherence to U.S. government regulations; ensure that administrative officers receive adequate training and supervision from trained and seasoned administrative staff; allow bureau administrative staff to back each other up when workload changes or staff are in training; and, facilitate the redistribution of administrative staff when programmatic priorities shift between bureaus. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 26: Voice of America management should make adherence to Equal Employment Opportunity concerns and leadership training a part of all supervisors' performance plans and their annual assessment ratings. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 27: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should identify and request the resources needed to complete the finance-related sections of the Manual of Operations and Administration and develop a realistic schedule for completing the sections. (Action: BBG CFO)

Recommendation 28: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should complete and post the finance-related sections of the Manual of Operations and Administration. (Action: BBG)

Recommendation 29: The Voice of America should require the head of the Central News Division to sign the Central News Division's annual internal controls assessment. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 30: The International Broadcasting Bureau should write and implement a policy requiring its Office of Administration to meet with all International Broadcasting Bureau division heads, including the Voice of America Director, before each years' assessments are due to explain each unit's responsibilities, provide examples of problems to report on, and to answer questions. (Action: IBB/Administration)

Recommendation 31: The International Broadcasting Bureau should provide funding for an additional contract classifier in its Office of Human Resources to ensure the proper and timely review of Central News Division position descriptions or funding to continue the two existing contractors to complete the Central News Division portion by the end of 2007. (Action: IBB).

Recommendation 32: The International Broadcasting Bureau should direct the Office of Human Resources to develop a system to provide a periodic status report to managers on the current status of hiring actions. (Action: IBB).

Recommendation 33: Voice of America should conduct a physical inventory of the Central News Division and reconcile results with both cuff records from the old database and records in the new database. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 34: Voice of America should poll all potential newswire users within the Broadcasting Board of Governors community to ensure all bureaus, grantees, and offices' requirements are considered before exercising newswire contract options or initiating newswire contract negotiations. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 35: The International Broadcasting Bureau, in coordination with Voice of America, should locate and add to its official contract and payment files documentation specifying the services the Central News Division has contracted for, the number of users allowed to access each of those services, and a pricing schedule listing the cost of each of those services. (Action: IBB, in coordination with VOA)

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Informal recommendations cover operational matters not requiring action by organizations outside the inspected unit and/or the parent organization. Informal recommendations will not be subject to the OIG compliance process. However, any subsequent OIG inspection or on-site compliance review will assess the inspected unit's progress in implementing the informal recommendations.

Executive Direction

There have been allegations in the recent past of political interference in the content of news reporting by BGG governors and VOA senior leadership. That this perception is widespread warrants efforts by VOA upper management to bring the issue out in the open and to make clear that the "firewall" applies equally to BBG and IBB upper leadership.

Informal Recommendation 1: The Voice of America should engage staff in an open discussion to outline the vision of what falls within the "firewall" and what falls outside of it.

Central News Division

CN's Washington correspondents, a leadership group within the VOA staff, rarely have a venue or opportunity to meet as a group to exchange ideas.

Informal Recommendation 2: Voice of America's Central News Division should institute a periodic meeting of the Washington correspondents. The meeting could take place in an informal setting, such as a "brown bag lunch" and should provide correspondents the opportunity to communicate about ideas, stories, assignments, and other pertinent issues.

At the time of this inspection, the new corps of VJs faced two technical problems that VOA had not fully resolved: (1) the "Mac" laptops were not being serviced by IBB computer support staff; (2) VJs in both the domestic and overseas bureaus were unable to access the IBB visual archives and could not, therefore, compose a complete program without this essential resource for images.

Informal Recommendation 3: Video journalists should be provided with technical support for their laptop computers and given access from domestic and overseas bureaus to the Voice of America video library.

Interlocutors reported that the VOA style guide was woefully out of date, predating television and Internet requirements. But the OIG team learned that the style book is present on the office intranet page and is updated regularly.

Informal Recommendation 4: The acting Central News managing editor should reissue the announcement to the staff informing them of the web site location of the updated version of the Voice of America Stylebook.

Washington correspondents who cover the Congress, the White House, the Department, and the Pentagon, said that they could be more helpful to their LS colleagues if the language services staff understood how the correspondents operated.

Informal Recommendation 5: Central News should conduct an orientation for Language Service journalists describing protocol, both formal and informal, for covering news at the White House, the Pentagon, the Department of State, and in Congress.

As language services produce more of their own material, it has become unclear to both LS and CN staff what material from the CN "lineup" is required to be used in LS news reports. It would be helpful to many on the VOA staff if, after discussion with the chiefs of CN and LS, the VOA Director could issue clear written guidance on what news LS should be required to use.

Informal Recommendation 6: The Voice of America should prepare and disseminate clear guidance to the language services on what products they are required to use from the Central News Division's News in English Broadcast wire.

Resource Management

Domestic and overseas management controls could improve by looking to other agencies or contractors for administrative support or advice.

Informal Recommendation 7: Broadcasting Board of Governors, International Broadcasting Bureau and Voice of America management should conduct cost-benefit analyses to determine if real property, human resources, and contracting support could be obtained outside of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for better results.

VOA is losing many of its more experienced administrative staff and those who remain require more training and direction. The OIG team believes centralizing the support in one office, rather than the current plan for partial oversight from the front office, would be a better long term solution.

Informal Recommendation 8: Voice of America, in coordination with the International Broadcasting Bureau Office of Human Resources, should identify and set aside sufficient funds for recruitment and training of its administrative staff.

Informal Recommendation 9: Rather than expecting mid-level administrative officers to be expert in a number of complex fields, Voice of America should consider separating administrative duties by function (such as financial management, human resource, procurement), similar to those used at other agencies, to facilitate recruitment and development of technical expertise.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Complaints from VOA staff indicated a need for more training for all employees on EEO principles, promotion of diversity, and what to do if one is subjected to discrimination.

Informal Recommendation 10: The International Broadcasting Bureau Office of Civil Rights should develop a program to remind all employees of the application of Equal Employment Opportunity principles, clearly addressing employees' rights and responsibilities, describing how the Office of Civil Rights may be able to assist them (stressing the need for documentation); and, providing an avenue to answer questions.

Travel

IBB does not have a policy to allow travel advances when the traveler has lost use of his or her U.S. government credit card. Exceptions, however, can be requested in writing by the individual's supervisor and are approved on a case-by-case basis.

Informal Recommendation 11: The International Broadcasting Bureau should consider a more liberal travel advance policy that would allow travel advances for infrequent travelers or for travel of lengthy duration as long as the advances are properly handled and paid back in a timely manner.

Informal Recommendation 12: The International Broadcasting Bureau should publicize widely and explain clearly its travel advance policy and the process for requesting an exception.

Even after initial IBB efforts to explain the new E-2 travel manager system, there have been numerous complaints from employees about the system.

Informal Recommendation 13: The Office of Financial Operations should more broadly publicize the existing web site, Frequently Asked Questions and PowerPoint presentation and directly urge travelers to take advantage of the availability of the one-on-one E-2 travel system training.

Parking and Security

IBB appears to have problems synchronizing the work schedule for evening shift personnel and the hours of operation of the parking areas.

Informal Recommendation 14: Voice of America should take up this parking issue with the International Broadcasting Bureau as a management priority as it has an impact on operational efficiency.

The OIG team received a number of employee reports that some Cohen building security guards had been found asleep at their posts be addressed.

Informal Recommendation 15: The International Broadcasting Bureau should address these security concerns with building management.

Management Controls

Neither the VOA Director's office nor the Central News Division could locate the self-assessment checklists that supported the Central News Division's 2006 assessment that internal and management controls were working effectively and that program and administrative functions were performed in an economical and efficient manner.

Informal Recommendation 16: The Central News Division should maintain underlying support for its management controls self assessment as required in the Manual of Operations and Administration.

Although VOA's 2006 statement of assurance reported no weaknesses, VOA's underlying support for that assessment was incomplete. VOA only completed the "Generic Questions" portion of the checklist despite the fact that VOA managers and administrative staff are responsible for a number of important controls included in other sections. Additionally, VOA's assessments referred to the "front office" and not to "VOA."

Informal Recommendation 17: The Voice of America Director's office, when completing and submitting its management controls statement of assurance to International Broadcasting Bureau/Administration, should ensure that all relevant questions are completed and that its submission reflects an assessment of all Voice of America operations, not only those of the Voice of America's front office.

The Central News Division's domestic warranted contracting officer who signs the vast majority of domestic CN procurements supervises certification officers overseas and could, therefore, pressure those officers into certifying payments for procurements that she herself signed. Separating contracting and certifying responsibilities is an important internal control.

Informal Recommendation 18: The Voice of America, in coordination with the Chief Financial Officer's office, should establish a control to ensure that certifying officers overseas are not pressured by their supervisor into certifying payments for procurements that their supervisor signed.

Hiring Process/Filling Positions

A number of CN employees complained about the length of time it takes HR to recruit and fill a vacancy and the difficulty in figuring out where in the process a position action might be. OIG discovered that HR has published, and maintains on its webpage, a comprehensive guide listing the "Steps in the Hiring Process" and explaining the amount of time required for each step.

Informal Recommendation 19: International Broadcasting Bureau Office of Human Resources should be more aggressive in drawing the attention of the Voice of America staff to the web site describing "Steps in the Hiring Process" and ensure that all Central News employees are aware of it.

There is confusion and suspicion among the VOA staff, particularly the CN staff about the lack of transparency on what positions are vacant and the status of filling them.

Informal Recommendation 20: The Office of Human Resources should develop an electronic status board on its web site where the current status of hiring actions could be easily and quickly obtained.

The OIG team heard reports from CN employees that they did not understand why some positions could be filled without competition and others had to be competed.

Informal Recommendation 21: The Office of Human Resources should publish broadly its policy on competing positions to make it clear to employees when competition is and is not required.

Awards, Employee Recognition

CN employees were concerned about the lack of transparency of the awards program.

Informal Recommendation 22: The Office of Human Resources should disseminate broadly the criteria and the rules for eligibility for awards.

Training

The HR training office plans to expand leadership training and training to improve performance and increase promotion potential.

Informal Recommendation 23: The International Broadcasting Bureau's Office of Human Resources should develop a more complete and tailored training plan and encourage employees to prepare individual development plans that can be facilitated by a new effective range of training courses.

Training records are not held in one place, so it is difficult to monitor who has had what training. IBB has plans to be integrated into the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System, by the end of CY 2008.

Informal Recommendation 24: The International Broadcasting Bureau's Office of Human Resources should move forward with its plans to join the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System and complete its integration by the end of CY 2008, so that better training records can be established and maintained.

Assistance and Advice for Employees

The position of ombudsman for IBB became vacant in June 2006. This position represents the possibility of providing a grass roots sounding board for management concerns. There is currently poor morale and much dissatisfaction among the rank and file.

Informal Recommendation 25: The International Broadcasting Bureau should consider filling the ombudsman position.

Metrics and Customer Service Feedback

HR maintains detailed tracking records and graphs of the time it takes to fill positions. These results, however, are not broken down to reflect the results for particular divisions of VOA.

Informal Recommendation 26: International Broadcasting Bureau Office of Human Resources should craft a means of presenting the results of its tracking of the time that is taken to fill positions in a way that shows the results for the different divisions of the Voice of America.

Some CN employees complained to OIG about the quality of the service received from the Office of Human Resources. The Office of Human Resources has been tracking information from departing employees, feedback on candidate lists for vacant positions, and the time it takes to complete hiring actions, but it does not survey its current customers for feedback.

Informal Recommendation 27: The International Broadcasting Bureau's Office of Human Resources should conduct a broad-based, active feedback study of all served employees in order to monitor service provider quality.

Outsourcing and Contracting Out

Employee complaints of inadequate service from IBB HR may be due to understaffing and lack of funds.

Informal Recommendation 28: The International Broadcasting Bureau Office of Human Resources should assess whether its servicing ratios are adequate to meet their needs, and if not, should request more resources from Broadcasting Board of Governors to staff the office properly or should consider outsourcing some of its HR functions to other U.S. government agencies.

Personal Property Management

Bureau correspondents were confused about which database certain property, such as teleconferencing equipment, should appear on. IBB recently merged its IBB/Administration and IBB/E inventory databases but had not issued guidance to accountable property officers – including bureau correspondents – outlining any requirements that had changed.

Informal Recommendation 29: The Office of Administration, in coordination with the Office of Engineering, should issue and publish in its Memorandum of Operations and Administration, any changes to requirements resulting from the merger of the inventory databases.

Some Central News Division property control officers are responsible both for conducting physical inventories and for maintaining inventory records; these responsibilities should be separated.

Informal Recommendation 30: The Central News Division should separate responsibility for conducting physical inventories and maintaining inventory records.

Procurement

A number of overseas correspondents reported that the procurement training they received before traveling overseas was not adequate.

Informal Recommendation 31: The Central News Division, in coordination with the Office of Contracts, should either tailor overseas correspondent contract training to typical Voice of America overseas operations or enroll overseas correspondents in the Foreign Service Institute's simplified acquisitions course.

Office of Contracts' staff stated that their policy had been to respond to overseas correspondents' questions within 24 hours. The supervisor who instituted the policy, however, retired in 2005, and it is unclear if the policy stands.

Informal Recommendation 32: The Central News Division should request that the Office of Contracts reinstitute its policy to respond to overseas correspondents within 24 hours and publish the policy either in the Manual of Operations and Administration or on the Office of Contracts' webpage.

Office of Contracts' staff stated that often they receive requests – primarily dealing with leases – at the last minute leaving them little time to provide educated advice or adequate reviews.

Informal Recommendation 33: The Central News Division should request that the Office of Contracts disseminate the amount of lead time needed to complete various contract-related tasks.

The (former) CN Division Program Manager is specified as the primary ARCO in the Newswire Contracts; however, she does not receive nor sign all newswire invoices such as those sent to the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, Language Service bureaus, or Radio Free Asia. Newswire contracts should specify all individuals who have

authority to accept newswire services. Staff in the Office of Contracts stated that they often specify "Field ARCOs" for just that purpose.

Informal Recommendation 34: The Office of Contracts, in coordination with the primary newswire authorized representative of the contracting officer or authorized representative of the contracting officer, should ensure that all newswire contracts specify the individuals who have authority to accept newswire services.

Financial Management

CN initiates payments to stringers using a list of used CN products from the MSR system. Most stringers do not submit invoices to CN and rely on the MSR system to capture their work. While this method of initiating payments generally works, the system breaks down when a stringer has been asked to complete a piece, but that piece is not actually used by CN. If the work is requested but not actually used, the contractors are still owed payment for the story if this stipulation is in their contract.

Informal Recommendation 35: The Central News Division should institute a process to ensure that stringers are paid in accordance with their contracts

Some stringers complained that they are not paid in a timely fashion. The OIG team reviewed the process and found that payments for stringers are convoluted.

Informal Recommendation 36: The Central News Division should review the process for paying stringers and determine if any of the steps in the process can be removed or can be carried out in Washington to reduce payment time.

Blanket travel authorizations are set up for most correspondents, though many only travel infrequently.

Informal Recommendation 37: The Central News Division should review its use of blanket travel authorizations with an aim to reducing the amount of funds obligated based on estimates.

Central News provides all overseas correspondents with a "revolving advance" when they travel to an overseas bureau. The advance is supposed to be paid back at the completion of their assignment years later.

Informal Recommendation 38: The Central News Division should review its use of revolving advances with an aim to reducing the amount of funds obligated based on estimates.

Central News Division administrative staff work a significant amount of overtime.

Informal Recommendation 40: The Central News Division should review the amount of overtime worked by staff to determine whether hiring additional administrative officers would be less costly.

Neither cell phone, nor satellite phone bills are sent to CN employees for certification that all calls were made for business. VOA CN administrative officers performed this function in the past.

Informal Recommendation 41: The Central News Division, in coordination with the Chief Financial Officer's office should establish a policy on personal use of cell phones and a mechanism for employees to refund the U.S. government for personal use of the phones.

The Central News Division could not locate BBG's policy on personal use of cell phones or satellite phones.

Informal Recommendation 42: The Chief Financial Officer's office should publish the policy on personal use of cell phones or satellite phones and reimbursement procedures, if applicable.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

Director of the Voice of America	Danforth W. Austin	12/06
Acting Managing Editor	Jack Payton	03/07

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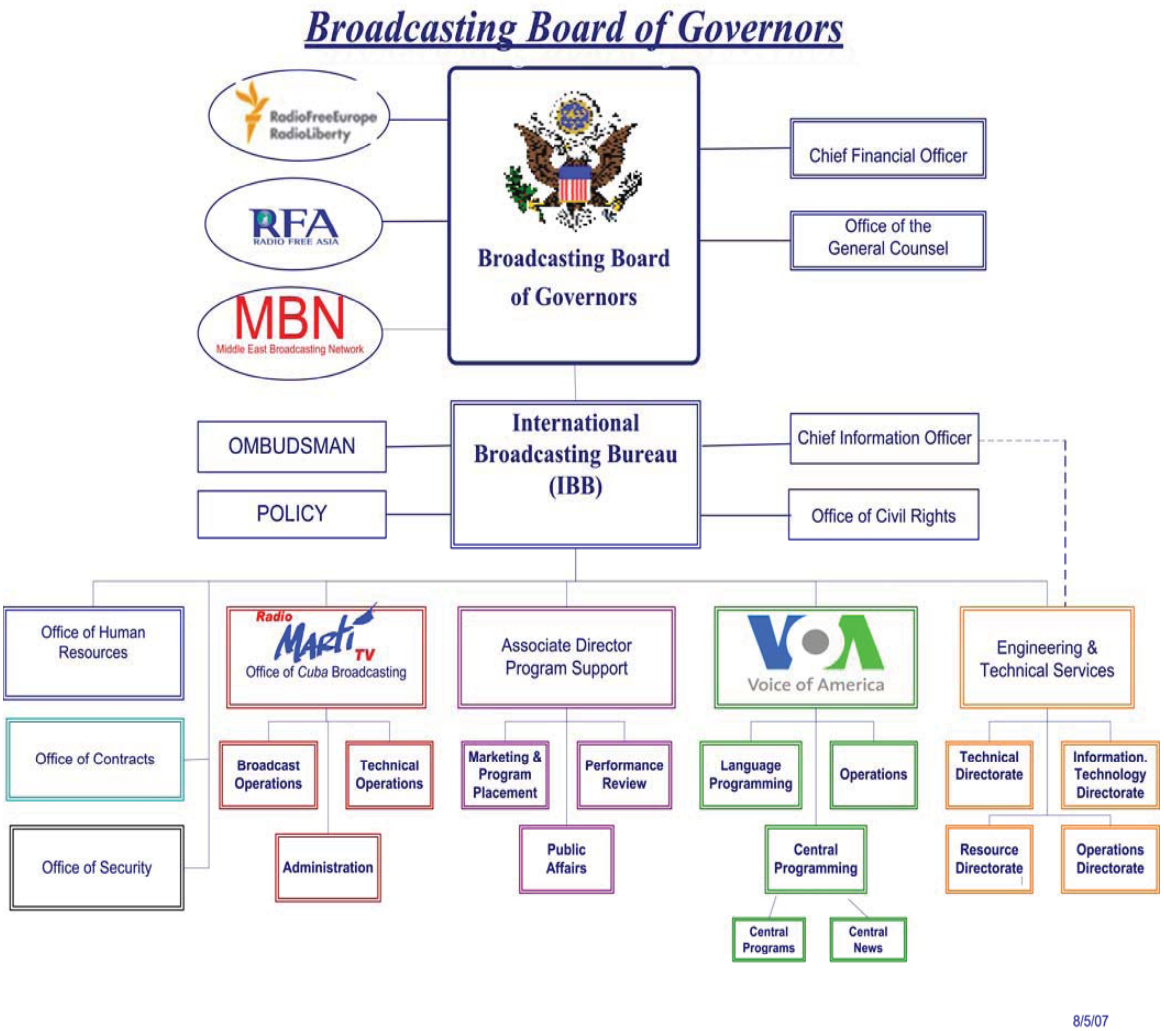
ABBREVIATIONS

AM	Medium wave radio
ARCO	Authorized Representative of the Contracting officer
BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CN	Central News Division
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FM	Frequency modulation radio
HR	Human resources
IBB	International Broadcasting Bureau
IBB/E	Office of Engineering and Technical Services within IBB
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IPM	Inventory Property Management database
IT	Information Technology
LS	Associate Directorate of Language Programming (Language Services)
MOA	Manual of Operations and Administration
NEB	News in English Broadcast Wire
OCR	Office of Civil Rights
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
PCO	Property control officer
P/R	IBB Office of Performance Review
RIF	Reduction in Force

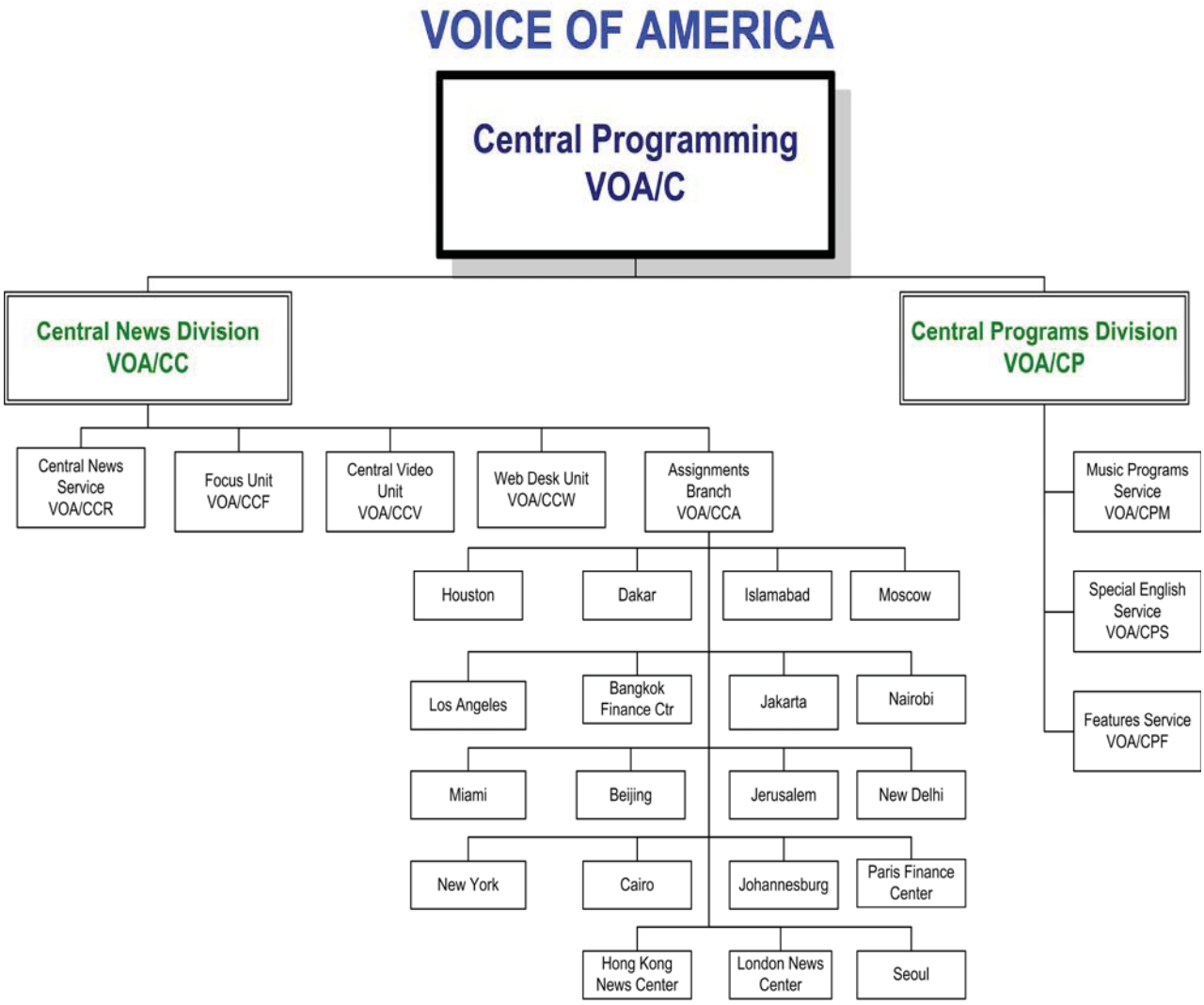
TV	Television
USIA	United States Information Agency
VJ	Video journalists
VOA	Voice of America
VOA/CC	Central News Division

ATTACHMENT A



~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

ATTACHMENT B



BBG/IBB/M/H
9/20/2006

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

ATTACHMENT C

The Voice of America Charter

The Charter was written in the late 1950's, was signed as a Presidential directive by President Eisenhower in 1960, and with the passage of Public Law 94-350, was signed into law by President Gerald Ford in 1976. It protects the independence and integrity of VOA programming.

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.

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ATTACHMENT D

Central News and Central Television Funding[21]

Central News FY 2007 Allotment
Based on Approved FY 2007 Program Plan

Offices	Local Hires	Authorized Americians	Salaries	GOE	Total
Central News Division					
Special Events		2	298,000	175,850	473,850
Ofc of Chief		6	690,000	2,142,442	2,832,442
Central News (includes Sports)		60	5,594,000	849,191	6,443,191
Focus Unit		5	511,000	19,974	530,974
Central Video		26	2,573,000	493,487	3,066,487
Web Desk		11	1,358,000	224,268	1,582,268
Assignments		38	4,657,000	721,187	5,378,187
Total		*148*	*15,681,000*	*4,626,399*	*20,307,399*
Domestic Bureaus					
Houston		1	153,081	34,564	187,645
Los Angeles		2	224,954	24,151	249,105
Miami		1	72,646	27,814	100,460
New York		4	432,621	19,079	451,700
Total		*8*	*883,302*	*105,608*	*988,910*
Overseas Bureaus					
Bangkok	5	1	205,477	146,537	352,014
Beijing	2	3	278,473	394,486	672,959
Cairo	2	1	202,278	163,757	366,035
Dakar	-	1	111,631	252,152	363,783
Islamabad	2	1	128,972	148,103	277,075
Hong Kong	6	3	1,126,625	1,288,348	2,414,973
Jakarta	-	1			324,472

[21] International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) charges for overseas operations are funded by the CFO's office and are not included in budget figures above; domestic bureau rent changes are funded by the IBB Office of Administration and are not included in the domestic bureau budget above; newswire services used at overseas bureaus are paid out of the office of the VOA domestic CN budget not the overseas bureau budget; and, overseas correspondent travel and home leave transfer costs are funded domestically.

			112,671	211,801	
Jerusalem	1	2	239,625	128,056	367,681
Joberg	1	1	192,779	154,539	347,318
London	5	1	727,118	725,080	1,452,198
Moscow	1	2	178,032	203,006	381,038
Nairobi	1	1	197,303	235,109	432,412
New Delhi	2	1	112,153	263,446	375,599
Paris	3		266,530	20,335	286,865
Seoul	-	1	97,646	163,180	260,826
Total	*31*	*20*	*4,177,313*	*4,497,935*	*8,675,248*
Grand Total	*31*	*176*	*20,741,615*	*9,229,942*	*29,971,557*

FY 2006 Funding for VOA Television Program Initiative

Element	Total FY 2006 \1
Persian - TV: Bring TV Schedule to 4 hrs daily	**5,469**
Afghan - Dari/Pashto TV: 1 hr/day	**1,287**
Urdu:TV 1hr/day	**3,074**
TV Central support	**10,135**
TV Studio Infrastructure	**4,795**
Management/Administrative Support Costs	**68**
Total	**20,033**

\1 This includes $1.7 million from the FY 2005 Emergency Supplemental that remained available in FY 2006.