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

Report of Inspection

The Broadcasting Board of Governors' Operations in and Broadcasting to Pakistan

Report Number ISP-IB-05-67, September 2005

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|---|-------------|
| KEY JUDGMENTS | 1 |
| CONTEXT..... | 3 |
| Setting and History..... | 3 |
| Mission..... | 5 |
| PROGRAM MANAGEMENT..... | 7 |
| Urdu Initiative..... | 8 |
| Need for Pashto Programming for Pakistanis..... | 9 |
| Paving the Way for Voice of America Television..... | 10 |
| PROGRAM PERFORMANCE | 11 |
| Radio Aap ki Duniyaa Achieving Success | 11 |
| Antiterrorism Broadcasting | 13 |
| Reaching Major Cities with a Strong FM Signal | 14 |
| Reaching Internet Users in Pakistan | 16 |
| HUMAN RESOURCES..... | 17 |
| Review Adequacy of Human Resources..... | 17 |
| Voice of America Bureau Chief Vacancy | 18 |
| Service Arrangements..... | 18 |
| MANAGEMENT CONTROLS | 21 |
| Guard Services Contract | 22 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS | 23 |
| PRINCIPAL OFFICERS | .25 |
| ABBREVIATIONS | .27 |

KEY JUDGMENTS

- In the difficult and challenging setting posed by the environment in Pakistan the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), through the efforts of the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) and the Voice of America (VOA), is making a contribution to U.S. interests in Pakistan and the region and, in doing so, is making a positive contribution to the global war on terror.
- VOA's Urdu initiative was launched on May 10, 2004, with the introduction of Radio Aap ki Duniyaa, a new brand meaning "your world" in Urdu. VOA has applied the objectives in the BBG strategic plan of adopting the principles and practices of modern radio formats and going local in content and presence. This has paid off with audience growth and growing credibility.
- Embassy Islamabad sees the tribal areas of Pakistan as a prime target audience. Recognizing that Pakistan is on the frontline in the global war on terror and that VOA broadcasts are a potentially powerful tool of public diplomacy, Embassy Islamabad feels strongly that VOA broadcasts to Pakistan also need to be in Pashto for Pashto speaking Pakistanis.
- A major hurdle in Pakistan is the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) ordinance of 2002. In general, PEMRA has been used to maintain a government monopoly of broadcast news and to limit access by foreign broadcasters. The embassy is quietly working for liberalization of the media that would open the door to VOA affiliates.
- Embassy Islamabad believes VOA "desperately" needs more capacity to reach a larger audience in Pakistan. BBG and VOA are proceeding with a significant technical upgrade soon to be completed and a promotional campaign to be launched in October 2005. In conjunction with that, IBB needs to establish a performance measurement objective for signal strength

and audience in and around Karachi with a timetable for achieving those objectives. This would be the best way to determine whether additional enhancements to transmission capability and coverage are required and ensure that objectives for maximizing the audience in Pakistan are met in support of U.S. interests.

- The management controls regime at the VOA Islamabad News Bureau is good. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) was satisfied with procurement, cashiering, and inventory and observed a proper separation of duties. However, the bureau does need to make changes in its contract for guard services.

The purpose of this inspection was to assess the general operations of BBG's operations in and broadcasting to Pakistan, including its program management, program performance, human resources, and management controls. The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between April 5 and April 21, 2005, and in Islamabad, Pakistan between May 6 and May 28, 2005, concurrently with the inspection of Embassy Islamabad, Pakistan and its constituent posts by an inspection team headed by Ambassador Eileen Malloy. It was conducted in accordance with quality standards for inspections prescribed by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency by Louis McCall, Coordinator for International Broadcasting and Public Diplomacy Evaluations, Office of Inspector General.

CONTEXT

SETTING AND HISTORY

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a country of 162 million people in South Asia. Pakistan supported the United States in opposing the occupation by the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan, contributing to the withdrawal of Soviet military from that country in 1993. Today Pakistan is a partner in the global war on terror. Since the September 11, 2001, terror attacks against the United States, Pakistan has arrested key al-Qaida terrorists and has worked with the United States to prevent its territory from becoming a safe haven for the defeated Afghan Taliban regime that had provided sanctuary and common cause with Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida terrorist organization.

The U.S.-Pakistan government-to-government relationship is good and is carried on at a high level, bilateral investment and trade continues to grow, and educational and cultural links are once again cautiously resuming growth in the aftermath of a precipitous decline after the September 11, 2001 attacks. In spite of these positive factors, average Pakistanis do not hold the image of the United States, its policy, and American culture in high regard.¹ Stephen P. Cohen, a senior fellow in foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution with expertise in Pakistan and India, expressed the opinion in congressional testimony that "Pakistan is probably the most anti-American country in the world..."² Opposition parties and many clerics in this 97 percent Muslim country readily vilify the United States and its motives. A March 2004 poll found that 65 percent of Pakistanis held a favorable view of al-Qaida founder Osama bin Laden.³

¹Pew Research Center, *Trends 2005*, Chapter 7, "Global Opinion: The Spread of Anti-Americanism." Also see, "Iraqi Vote Mirrors Desire for Democracy in Muslim World," The Pew Global Attitudes Project, Feb. 3, 2005.

²Statement of Stephen P. Cohen Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, January 28, 2004.

³Pew Research Center, *A Year After Iraq War*, March 16, 2004.

The country has a thriving, growing, relatively free media with over 40 daily newspapers and 22 television stations, and more than 52 AM or FM radio station licenses have been granted. In process are 31 applications for satellite TV licenses, the majority of which are from newspaper owners. However, there is an anti-U.S. bias in the Urdu (the national language) and English language media, and the state of investigative reporting is weak, permitting gratuitous and unjustified negative stories about the United States that more professional journalism would not have sanctioned. The PEMRA ordinance of 2002 gives the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation, the Pakistan Television Corporation, and the Shalimar Recording and Broadcasting Company, all government entities, a monopoly on the broadcasting of news within Pakistan and limits access by foreign broadcasters.

Pakistan is a high threat posting. Al-Qaida and Taliban terrorists and their sympathizers are present within the borders of Pakistan. In the tribal areas of the North West Frontier Province, where three million Afghan refugees lived during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and where nearly 1.9 million still remain, the government has waged a campaign for the loyalties of the citizenry, who have tribal/ethnic (Pashtun), linguistic (Pashto), and other affinities with the Taliban. Another 783,545 Afghan refugees are located in the province of Balochistan, which also borders Afghanistan. American direct-hire employees are assigned to the embassy for one year, unaccompanied tours. The few family members at post are all working for the U.S. mission as direct hires or eligible family member employees. It is difficult, for security reasons, to conduct public diplomacy with the frequency, numbers of local participants, and in the locations that a more secure environment would permit, given the importance of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.

Pakistan is a country given to religious extremism and has been subject to periodic flare-ups of sectarian and electoral violence. In the past, there have been episodes in which deadly violence has been directed at American citizens and the U.S. mission. In 1979, a mob, acting on a false rumor of American desecration of Islam's holiest site in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, attacked and burned the embassy in Islamabad resulting in two American deaths. American employees were assassinated on their way to work in Karachi in 1995. In 2002, Consulate General Karachi was bombed causing loss of life, and a church frequented by Embassy Islamabad staff was attacked by terrorists during a service resulting in the death of two embassy family members. The possibility of future volatile and violent reactions to actual incidents or rumors involving events in the West Bank, Gaza, Mecca, Afghanistan, Iraq, or even the United States cannot be ruled out. In this difficult and challenging setting the BBG, through the efforts of IBB and VOA, is making a contribution to U.S. interests in Pakistan and the region, and in doing so, is also making a positive contribution to the global war on terrorism.

MISSION

The mission of the VOA in Pakistan is its traditional mission, as taken from its charter, of serving as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news that is accurate, objective, and comprehensive; to represent America by presenting a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions; and to present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively by presenting responsible discussions and opinion of these policies.⁴ IBB's mission is to deliver the VOA programming to the target audience with a strong clear signal and at times that maximize that audience. It seeks to accomplish this through the Office of Engineering and Technical Services and the Office of Marketing and Program Placement.

⁴P.L. 94-350.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Within Pakistan, VOA maintains a news bureau normally managed by a VOA English correspondent in the role of bureau chief. That position was vacant at the time of the inspection and was temporarily being filled by a contract employee dispatched from the supervising VOA News Bureau in Hong Kong. Effectively, part of the management was being provided by two supervisory editors in Hong Kong. A recent OIG report reviewed the management provided by the VOA Hong Kong News Bureau.⁵

VOA's Urdu service in Pakistan, collocated in the same bureau, is managed by a locally employed contract super stringer with the title of Coordinator for Urdu News. Actual oversight of the Urdu operation in Pakistan is provided by VOA's chief of the 27-person-strong Urdu service in Washington, with the assistance of Urdu service shift editors in Washington, and all under VOA's Director of the West and South Asia Division. In its management of Radio Aap ki Dunyaa, VOA has been faithful to its mandates and has included U.S. government editorials, translated into Urdu.⁶



VOA Islamabad News Bureau Building

⁵*Inspection of Broadcasting Board of Governors' Operations in Hong Kong*, OIG Report number ISP-IB-05-64, XXX, 2005.

⁶22 U.S.C. § 6202(b)(3).

URDU INITIATIVE

VOA has had its Urdu service on shortwave since May 13, 1951.⁷ VOA's recent Urdu initiative was launched on May 10, 2004, with the introduction of Radio Aap ki Duniya, a new brand meaning "your world" in Urdu. BBG has a committee for this Urdu initiative including key Washington staff and board member Governor Steven J. Simmons.⁸ As a reflection of the priority given to the Urdu initiative, the committee meets regularly, and a program review is held quarterly. Normally, a language service only has an annual program review. Changes in format have produced favorable results in the first half of 2005. In this, VOA has applied the objectives in the BBG strategic plan of adopting the principles and practices of modern radio formats and going local in content and presence. This has paid off with audience growth, demonstrated by results from recent audience research, and in growing credibility. Evidence of that credibility is seen in the surge in attributions appearing in the Pakistan media. According to the coordinator for Urdu News at the Islamabad news bureau, attributions increased from one or two per month to an average of 15 or more and as high as 25. OIG reviewed a recent weekend of attributions to confirm the level indicated. Although attributions appear in both the English and Urdu language media, the coordinator only reports those in the English media from four principal national dailies, so the actual number of attributions from all sources is much higher than is reported. The papers monitored for attributions are *The News*, *Daily Dawn*, *The Nation*, and *The Daily Times*.

Two national Urdu language dailies, *The Daily Jang (War)* and *Nawa-e-Waqt (Today's Voice)*, are co-owned respectively by *The News* and *The Nation* and carry a similar level of attributions to their English language sister papers. Attributions benefit from a daily *Radio Monitoring Report*, issued by a government entity, the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation, that gives a prominent place to transcripts of VOA's Radio Aap ki Duniya news, identified as VOA Urdu. These transcripts, which identify reporters by name, are provided to Pakistan media outlets. This makes it very easy for the printed media to pick up stories and attribute them to VOA. Given that the *Radio Monitoring Report* also includes news broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation's Urdu service, the Voice of Germany's Urdu

⁷The VOA Urdu service was off the air from September 1953 until August 1954.

⁸Testimony of Kenneth Y. Tomlinson, Chairman Broadcasting Board of Governors before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, February 10, 2004, p. 4.

service, and other broadcasters, including CNN, it speaks well of VOA that it is getting a good number of attributions with prominent placement, including some page one placements.

NEED FOR PASHTO PROGRAMMING FOR PAKISTANIS

VOA has a Pashto service that includes stringers in Pakistan, all of whom are Afghans. Their reports are primarily intended for and directed to the audience in Afghanistan and the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan. An IBB medium wave transmitter in Kabul broadcasting the Pashto service is clearly heard in the tribal areas of Northern Pakistan.

Embassy Islamabad sees the tribal areas of Pakistan as a prime target audience. Recognizing that Pakistan is on the frontline in the global war on terrorism and that VOA broadcasts are a potentially powerful tool of public diplomacy, Embassy Islamabad feels strongly that VOA broadcasts to Pakistan also need to be in Pashto with programming for Pashto speaking Pakistanis. Although Urdu is the official language, many of the people in the tribal lands do not speak Urdu. In addition, about 35 percent of the population of Balochistan province, mostly concentrated in the northern areas of the province around Quetta, are Pashto speakers. According to Embassy Islamabad, these are the areas where extremism is prominent and, for that reason, broadcasts in Pashto are more important than broadcasts in Urdu.

Recommendation 1: The Broadcasting Board of Governors, in coordination with the Department of State, should review its broadcasts to Pakistan with an eye toward the possible introduction of Pashto programming directed at the native Pakistan Pashtun audience in Pakistan. (Action: BBG, in coordination with Embassy Islamabad, R, S/P, and SA)

The BBG deliberated on this recommendation and, given limited resources, believes its Afghanistan broadcasting services provide sufficient Pashto programming to the native Pakistan Pashtun audience in Pakistan.

PAVING THE WAY FOR VOICE OF AMERICA TELEVISION

Under the BBG strategic plan goal of employing modern communication techniques and technologies is the objective of infusing more TV into the mix⁹ BBG is making headway on that objective in Pakistan where TV is rapidly becoming the medium of choice for Pakistanis. Given the limitations imposed by PEMRA, BBG has done a good job of getting VOA programming, including news, into Pakistan. During the inspection, IBB's Associate Director for Program Support and VOA's Associate Director for Central Programming traveled to Pakistan where they concluded successful discussions with GEO, a privately owned Urdu language satellite television channel broadcast out of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, to broadcast VOA TV Urdu programming to Pakistan. GEO is affiliated with Jang Publications, a producer of major national English and Urdu language daily newspapers in Pakistan, and thus has 50 years of journalistic experience to draw upon. Because GEO is technically off shore, it is not subject to PEMRA, except regarding the uplink of content from within Pakistan. However, President Musharraf has allowed a change in PEMRA, approved by the National Assembly during the inspection and awaiting approval by the upper house, that would liberalize the rules that now prohibit print media companies like the Jang Group from getting into the electronic media business.

The eventual success of putting VOA Urdu programming on the GEO satellite channel would further raise the profile of VOA in Pakistan and increase its audience. The format for this effort will be a half-hour TV news magazine five days a week to debut in October 2005, accompanied by a marketing campaign. This is a new step for GEO, which has not previously allowed an outside producer to generate news-related programming. Embassy Islamabad expressed high praise for this achievement by VOA. Since liberalization of the media in Pakistan is a work in progress, this new initiative, which is in the nature of an experiment for Pakistan, will be followed with interest to see how it develops. The potential is great. Plans are underway to install a television studio in the VOA Islamabad News Bureau to facilitate video journalism contributions to this new initiative. OIG observed uncrated equipment for the installation being staged at the bureau.

⁹*Marrying the Mission to the Market*, p. 6.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

VOA's audience in Pakistan and its infrastructure have started out small but have grown. The turning point was September 11, 2001. Prior to September 11, 2001, there were only two stringers in Pakistan for VOA's Urdu service, and the Urdu service was broadcast for only 90 minutes in shortwave, one hour in the evening and a 30-minute morning show. Immediately after September 11, 2001, broadcast time was doubled, still on shortwave only, with the time allotted for the evening and morning programs each being doubled. A few months thereafter stringers for the Urdu service were added in the eight biggest and most important cities of Pakistan. On May 10, 2004, the BBG's Urdu initiative made a quantum jump with the introduction of Radio Aap ki Duniyaa, which broadcasts on a medium wave (AM) signal for 12 hours a day between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. local time, reaching millions of potential listeners in Pakistan and north-east India. The station broadcasts on shortwave for three hours a day (7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., and 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. Pakistan time). The station also carries 12 hours on a digital audio satellite and via the Internet. Two more stringers were also added.

RADIO AAP KI DUNIYAA ACHIEVING SUCCESS

With the introduction of Radio Aap ki Duniyaa, the Urdu service's all news format gave way to a mixture of music, information features, and news. However, the 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. time slots maintained their all news format. At other times, news leads off at the top of the hour for five minutes. Beginning on May 2, 2005, the format of Radio Aap ki Duniyaa was further revamped to cover more Pakistan news with more in depth stories, featuring the pace and style of a modern FM radio format. Individual news reports were also compressed from a length of two to two and a half minutes down to one and a half minutes. However, greater depth was accomplished with follow-up reports that presented both sides of an issue despite the shorter length of reports.

The BBG standard for a significant audience is five percent. The pre-September 11, 2001, audience values for the VOA Urdu service were well below that standard. Even a year after September 11, 2001, audience values were only about one to two percent.¹⁰ A recently completed national survey of Pakistan commissioned by BBG's Office of Research, indicated VOA's Urdu programming is reaching three percent of adults weekly, a figure roughly twice as high as that found in previous surveys. Listening to VOA's Radio Aap ki Duniyaa was highest in the Northwest Frontier Province--a part of Pakistan that includes areas immediately bordering on Afghanistan. In comparison, the BBC Urdu programming, broadcasting into Pakistan with a strong signal, reaches 12.8 percent weekly.

OIG found that the Radio Aap ki Duniyaa medium wave signal, which comes from an old Soviet era 500 kilowatt transmitter located in Orzu, Tajikistan leased by IBB, is heard well in northern areas of Pakistan, not very well and only in pockets in the capital area of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, and not at all in the far south where Karachi, the world's largest Muslim city is located. However, IBB is currently installing a state-of-the-art 800-kilowatt, medium-wave transmitter in Tajikistan, which, along with a planned antenna upgrade, should result in improved reliability and audibility beginning in the summer of 2005. In about October 2005, VOA plans to launch a promotional campaign to increase awareness of the new Urdu-programming format. Sometime after that, an assessment of audience values in Pakistan would be expected to show a marked increase.

Embassy Islamabad expressed to OIG its opinion that VOA "desperately" needs more capacity to reach a larger audience in Pakistan. Because BBG and VOA are proceeding with a significant technical upgrade, soon to be completed, and a promotional campaign to be launched in about October 2005, OIG makes no recommendation at this time for increasing transmission capability. However, once the promotional campaign begins, OIG encourages BBG to permit that campaign to run for a number of months with periodic coverage in print media. The Radio Aap ki Duniyaa programs *Roundtable* and the call in show *Your World Your Voice* are gaining traction and popularity, would benefit from the promotional campaign and the transmitting upgrade, and would thus do their part in lifting the overall audience share. In conjunction with that, IBB should monitor signal strength in Karachi. Currently, IBB has a remote monitoring capability in Islamabad. It should

¹⁰*Marrying the Mission to the Market*, Strategic Plan 2002-2007, Broadcasting Board of Governors, Chart on *Weekly Listening in Higher Priority Languages*.

make similar arrangements, use a contract monitor, or some other method to obtain reliable and accurate data for the Karachi area. IBB also should establish performance measurement objectives for signal strength and audience in and around Karachi with a timetable for achieving those objectives. This would be the best way to determine whether additional enhancements to transmission capability and coverage are required and ensure that objectives for maximizing the audience in Pakistan are met in support of U.S. interests.

Recommendation 2: The International Broadcasting Bureau should make arrangements to monitor the Radio Aap ki Duniya signal, including signal performance in Karachi, and set performance measurement objectives for signal strength and audience share in and around Karachi with a timetable for achieving those objectives. (Action: IBB)

Although the IBB Office of Engineering and Technical Services does not completely concur with this recommendation, it intends to visit Karachi once the antenna upgrade is completed. The IBB monitor in Islamabad will make further periodic visits to the Karachi area, as warranted, to corroborate its predicted, statistically based, signal-strength measurements using data from a network of human and machine monitors throughout the region that it believes provides a reliable performance metric.

ANTITERRORISM BROADCASTING

The BBG, through the efforts of IBB and VOA, is making a contribution to U.S. interests in Pakistan and the region, and in doing so, is also making a positive contribution to the global war on terror. One specific way in which it has done this is through the use of its Urdu and Pashto service broadcasts to support the Rewards for Justice program. Embassy Islamabad, relying on funds from the Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, began an advertising campaign in Pakistan in January 2005 to publicize the financial rewards offered for information leading to the apprehension of terrorists believed to be in the region. VOA supported this effort in the framework of its news programming. Antiterrorism broadcasting and countering anti-Americanism can also be achieved through VOA's other programming such as roundtables, call-in shows, news magazines, and other

features. OIG believes this is being done in Pakistan, but BBG would need to include appropriate questions in future audience research and conduct focus groups over time to evaluate the degree of impact of its broadcasting.

REACHING MAJOR CITIES WITH A STRONG FM SIGNAL

According to BBG's strategic plan, the long-term vision for the agency is:

a flexible, multimedia, research-driven U.S. International Broadcasting System, incorporating regional network and single-country operations, that reaches mass audiences by programming the distinct content of the Voice of America and the surrogate services through state-of-the art formats and distribution channels - AM, FM, audio and video satellite, shortwave, and the Internet - that our audiences use and we control.

BBG has attempted to implement that vision in its broadcasting to Pakistan.

A major hurdle in Pakistan is the PEMRA ordinance of 2002. Among the criteria for a license, in section 5 of the legislation, is Pakistani ownership. Section 8 makes foreign entities ineligible for licenses. Section 24 permits the PEMRA authority, Pakistan's counterpart to the Federal Communications Commission in the United States, to prohibit any broadcaster from broadcasting or rebroadcasting any program, and section 25 gives the authority the power to proscribe a foreign broadcasting service. In general, PEMRA has been used to maintain a government monopoly of broadcast news and limit access by foreign broadcasters. This poses a major obstacle to the establishment of VOA affiliates or to the prospects for the IBB setting up IBB-owned and-operated medium wave or FM transmitters within the borders of Pakistan. Although the embassy is quietly working for liberalization of the media, it does not see the utility of pressing the government of Pakistan to permit independent in-country facilities for the broadcasting of news by foreign entities. Such broadcasts would, in the opinion of the embassy, become lightning rods for those members of the Pakistani political scene who believe that the government of Pakistan is too acquiescent to U.S. government demands. In the case of VOA, to do so would be to give an issue to anti-American Islamic extremists. However, the embassy does support PEMRA liberalization that would permit private Pakistani broadcasters to carry the news and to rebroadcast news from foreign sources--in effect, to open the door to VOA affiliates.

During congressional testimony on February 10, 2004, that included plans for the introduction of Radio Aap ki Duniyaa via AM broadcasts, BBG Chairman Kenneth Tomlinson announced that the Board believed it would soon add FM affiliates in Pakistan.¹¹ On May 10, 2004, Radio Aap ki Duniyaa began its programming on 972 AM from Tajikistan. In July 2004, Radio Aap ki Duniyaa programming began to be carried on a network of eight FM stations on FM 101 in Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Faisalabad, Quetta, Sialkot, Peshawar, and Hyderabad. This was made possible by a contract between the BBG and Clarity Communications, a private sector group based in Karachi, that leased large blocks of time on the FM 101 network from the government-owned Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation, and was a coup for BBG. However, according to BBG Executive Director and Acting Director for IBB, as an experiment to gain audience and establish an FM presence, the news was edited out of Radio Aap ki Duniyaa program rebroadcasts by VOA in order to comply with PEMRA. After a few months, BBG decided that the program was not worth the cost without the news included. The AM signal transmitted from Tajikistan includes the news. Funds saved from cancellation of the FM contract were reprogrammed to develop a half-hour weekday TV news magazine pilot to be broadcast on GEO TV.

In an approach that differed from that used by BBG and that tested the limits of PEMRA, the BBC's Urdu service began rebroadcasts of its programs, including news, on FM 103, a private network, in April 2004 from stations in Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, and Multan. However, the PEMRA authority notified the FM 103 licensee in June 2004 that rebroadcasting of foreign channels by FM radio stations was prohibited. Then again, in September 2004, the PEMRA authority served a notice on FM 103 directing it to stop airing BBC Urdu news. The licensee, Mast FM 103, argued that a precedent had been set by the state-owned FM 101 having signed a deal with VOA.¹² In the end, the BBC Urdu news broadcasts on Mast FM 103 were halted.

¹¹Testimony of Kenneth Y. Tomlinson, Chairman Broadcasting Board of Governors before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, February 10, 2004, p. 4.

¹²"Legal Battle Over Rebroadcast News Hots Up," *Media Law Bulletin*, Issue 1, Vol. 2, Feb.-April 2005, pp. 2 and 3.

REACHING INTERNET USERS IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan has only a fledgling, but rapidly growing pool of Internet users with 11 percent of Pakistanis saying they use the Internet at least once a month, including seven percent who access it weekly. Research indicates that these users tend to be predominantly well educated, male, and between 18 and 24 years of age.¹³ That same research indicated that for some urban Pakistanis the Internet is serving as a major source of information about the United States. The VOA Urdu service is well placed to take advantage of the interest of this group with its web site. Of course, that web site also cross-promotes Radio Aap ki Duniya and streams or web casts programs, a valuable feature for those unable to tune in to the on air broadcasts. Once on the air, Urdu TV programming by VOA could also be archived or streamed on the VOA Urdu web site.

¹³*Internet Use in Pakistan Highest Among Young, Well-Educated Males*, Department of State, Office of Research, South Asia Opinion Alert, June 28, 2004, p. 1.

HUMAN RESOURCES

VOA's stable of stringers in Pakistan to support VOA English and the Urdu service has grown appropriately since September 11, 2001. Two changes may require a further review of staffing. The first is the possible decision to provide programming directed at Pakistan's Pashto speakers. The second is the introduction of a TV studio in the bureau and the still developing and expanded role the bureau will have in video journalism, including news, features, and possible programs.

REVIEW ADEQUACY OF HUMAN RESOURCES

The coordinator for Urdu News in the Islamabad bureau has had video journalism training and has submitted features in the past. However, video journalism is resource intensive, with time being one of those resources. In order not to diminish his work in coordinating the Urdu news for Radio Aap ki Dunyaa, VOA may need to add an employee in the bureau who has the credentials of an international broadcaster capable of carrying part of the video journalism load. The coordinator for Urdu News is also a native Pashto speaker who did some coverage for VOA in Afghanistan prior to the U.S. invasion post September 11, 2001, and could also play a role in helping the Pashto service coordinate any new Pakistani Pashto speaking stringers for programming targeted at Pakistan's Pashtun areas (see Recommendation 1). When necessary, he also assists VOA English if no correspondent is available. VOA is fortunate to have such a valuable employee. Notwithstanding his linguistic, journalistic (radio and video), managerial skills, and ability to multitask, he will probably require help, depending on how BBG and VOA intend to proceed with Pashto programming for Pakistanis and expanded video journalism.

Recommendation 3: The Voice of America should review the human resource requirements necessary to carry out its expanding program in Pakistan and then hire or contract persons with the appropriate skills and in the appropriate numbers to meet the need. (Action: VOA)

VOA concurred with this recommendation and sent a delegation to Islamabad July 8, 2005, to review the Islamabad News Bureau staffing pattern in light of the expansion into television. It is expected that at least one new full-time video journalist will be hired to assist the Urdu coordinator, as required, with additional journalists to be hired on a per-piece basis, to assist either in writing or taping radio and television broadcast segments.

VOICE OF AMERICA BUREAU CHIEF VACANCY

The bureau chief position was vacant at the time of the inspection. The departing correspondent for VOA English had spent two years of a three-year tour before resigning for personal reasons and departing on March 31, 2005. To its credit, VOA has not left the position vacant, using a contract employee from the supervising VOA Hong Kong News Bureau as an interim measure. Although the contract employee performed admirably the importance of the issues and work require a permanent bureau chief.

Recommendation 4: The Voice of America should recruit and assign a bureau chief to its Islamabad News Bureau as soon as practicable. (Action: VOA)

VOA concurred with this recommendation and moved expeditiously to recruit and assign an Islamabad correspondent. VOA hopes to have the correspondent in place by the end of August 2005.

SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

VOA has not reviewed its employment arrangement with two individuals performing menial labor services at the news bureau and contract for their services with a personal services agreement or other suitable arrangement. Both the cleaner and the gardener have been working at the bureau since 1990. Both receive cash for their services from petty cash and neither has a contract, but actions the bureau has taken may give the appearance of an employer-employee relationship. For example, in very similar October 17, 2003, letters from the bureau chief to the

Foreign Service national administrative assistant, each of these individuals had a "pay raise" approved to reflect "satisfactory service to the bureau and the fact that his compensation has remained unchanged for more than [two or three] years..." However, these individuals currently have no benefits and would be due no compensation in the event of an on-the-job injury. When the gardener did injure himself on the job, a previous bureau chief paid for his medical expenses from his own personal funds.

Recommendation 5: The Voice of America, in coordination with Embassy Islamabad, should formalize the service arrangements between the Islamabad News Bureau and the gardener and cleaner to clarify their status. (Action: VOA, in coordination with Embassy Islamabad)

VOA concurred with this recommendation. Subsequently, the Hong Kong senior editor established contracts for the gardener and the cleaner. VOA undertakes to monitor both contracts to ensure there is no appearance of an employer-employee relationship. The new VOA Islamabad correspondent will also take the simplified acquisition course before taking up his new assignment so that he can ensure proper regulations are followed in the future.

OIG found reason to review the adequacy of compensation for locally employed staff, but referred that issue to OIG during the inspection of the U.S. mission. Any recommendation would appear in Inspection of Embassy Islamabad, Consulate General Karachi, and Consulates Lahore and Peshawar, Pakistan, OIG Report number ISP-I-05-35A, 2005.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The management controls regime at the VOA Islamabad News Bureau is good. OIG was satisfied with procurement, cashiering, inventory, and observed a proper separation of duties. However, the bureau does need to make changes in its contract for guard services.

In the absence of a direct-hire, American citizen bureau chief with a contracting warrant, the bureau works with the supervising bureau chief at VOA's Hong Kong News Bureau, VOA's Financial Liaison Office in Bangkok, the budget and fiscal office in Embassy Bangkok, VOA Administration in Washington, and IBB's Office of Administration in Washington to ensure that procurements and disposals of excess property are done properly and with adequate separation of duties. The interim bureau chief serves as receiving officer. The bureau received a message of commendation from the U.S. disbursing officer in Bangkok for 100 percent compliance with required cashier reconciliations. Although the administrative assistant is listed as an information assistant and contributes to research, she runs the office alone when both the bureau chief and the coordinator for Urdu News are traveling and gives priority to her administrative responsibilities. She is meticulous and conscientious.

GUARD SERVICES CONTRACT

Although the Islamabad news bureau uses the same guard service with which Embassy Islamabad contracts, it does not include guard services in its menu of services under the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) system. It is VOA policy to operate, to the maximum extent possible, administratively separate from U.S. embassies, so VOA negotiated a separate contract with the guard company in 1997. The agreement contained a clause stating that the agreement "shall continue to remain in force unless and until it is terminated by a written notice of termination...."¹⁴ The Federal Acquisition Regulation in subpart 17.204(e) states that, "Unless otherwise approved in accordance with agency procedures, the total of the basic and option periods shall not exceed five years in the cases of services...." Given that the guard company is seeking an increase, it would be contrary to the Federal Acquisition Regulation to negotiate such a change at this point without recompeting the contract.

Recommendation 6: The Voice of America should instruct its Islamabad News Bureau to terminate its guard contract, Agreement No: ISB/VOA/SMS-364/97-98, and to retain guard services in the most cost-effective manner, that complies with the Federal Acquisition Regulation and International Broadcasting Bureau policies. (Action: VOA, in coordination with the Islamabad News Bureau and Embassy Islamabad)

VOA concurred with this recommendation and plans to implement it in such a way that the bureau will not be without security while all options are being explored.

¹⁴Agreement No: ISB/VOA/SMS-364/97-98, *Security Services Agreement*, May 15, 1997.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Broadcasting Board of Governors, in coordination with the Department of State, should review its broadcasts to Pakistan with an eye toward the possible introduction of Pashto programming directed at the native Pakistan Pashtun audience in Pakistan. (Action: BBG, in coordination with Embassy Islamabad, R, S/P, and SA)

Recommendation 2: The International Broadcasting Bureau should make arrangements to monitor the Radio Aap ki Duniyaa signal, including signal performance in Karachi, and set performance measurement objectives for signal strength and audience share in and around Karachi with a timetable for achieving those objectives. (Action: IBB)

Recommendation 3: The Voice of America should review the human resource requirements necessary to carry out its expanding program in Pakistan and then hire or contract persons with the appropriate skills and in the appropriate numbers to meet the need. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 4: The Voice of America should recruit and assign a bureau chief to its Islamabad News Bureau as soon as practicable. (Action: VOA)

Recommendation 5: The Voice of America, in coordination with Embassy Islamabad, should formalize the service arrangements between the Islamabad News Bureau and the gardener and cleaner to clarify their status. (Action: VOA, in coordination with Embassy Islamabad)

Recommendation 6: The Voice of America should instruct its Islamabad News Bureau to terminate its guard contract, Agreement No: ISB/VOA/SMS-364/97-98, and to retain guard services in the most cost-effective manner, that complies with the Federal Acquisition Regulation and International Broadcasting Bureau policies. (Action: VOA, in coordination with the Islamabad News Bureau and Embassy Islamabad)

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

| | Name | Arrival Date |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Islamabad Bureau Chief | Vacant | |
| Coordinator for Urdu News | Ayaz Gul | 01/05 ¹⁵ |

¹⁵Ayaz Gul has been with VOA since August 17, 1996, and was elevated to the senior position for the Urdu service in Pakistan on January 1, 2005.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| BBG | Broadcasting Board of Governors |
| IBB | International Broadcasting Bureau |
| ICASS | International Cooperative Administrative Support Services |
| OIG | Office of Inspector General |
| OMB | Office of Management and Budget |
| PEMRA | Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordinance |
| VOA | Voice of America |