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

# Report of Inspection

## Broadcasting Board of Governors Operations in Kenya

Report Number ISP-IB-08-07, January 2008

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY JUDGMENTS ..... 1

CONTEXT ..... 3

VOICE OF AMERICA, EAST AFRICA BUREAU ..... 5

    Human Resources ..... 5

    Facilities and Security..... 6

    Financial Management: ..... 6

AFFILIATE ACTIVITY: OFFICE OF MARKETING AND PROGRAM PLACEMENT ..... 9

TRANSMISSION FACILITIES..... 11

EMBASSY COOPERATION ..... 13

PROGRAM IMPACT..... 15

    The Need to Advertise ..... 15

    The Need to Localize ..... 16

    The Need for More Analysis..... 19

    The Need to Communicate Transmission Information ..... 20

    The Need to Share Information..... 23

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 25

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 27

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS ..... 29

ABBREVIATIONS ..... 31

## KEY JUDGMENTS

- Nairobi is the hub of much of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG's) activity in East Africa. While individually well-run, the various BBG elements in Kenya do not communicate adequately among themselves. In Washington the offices of the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) and the Voice of America (VOA) that provide support have not been well-integrated in Washington nor have they communicated adequately with the field.
- East Africa is attracting increased attention in Washington and its media market is an important focus of VOA English, Swahili, and Somali broadcasting. However, the BBG initiatives in the region are under-resourced to meet this interest.
- VOA operates in a highly competitive market in East Africa. Challenges to reaching the widest possible audience come from the aggressive competition of other domestic and foreign broadcasters, the state of technology in the region, and limits on the resources available to IBB for transmitting and advertising of VOA products. BBG needs to:
  - assure that quality 24/7 FM transmissions in Kenya are re-established,
  - identify resources to enhance advertising,
  - continue the initiative to localize and enliven programming,
  - conduct audience surveys and focus group assessments for both its English and Swahili services.
- There is currently no local governmental opposition to, or obstruction of, BBG programming, but there has been politically motivated talk of restrictions for which BBG should consider a planned response.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between December 7, 2006, and January 19, 2007, and in Nairobi, Kenya, between February 12 and March 9, 2007. Follow-up discussions with VOA Washington were held between March 25 and June 18, 2007. The inspection was carried out in conjunction with the inspection of Embassy Kenya led by Ambassador Vincent M. Battle. Deputy Team Leader Frank Ward conducted the inspection of BBG operations in Kenya.



## CONTEXT

The BBG has several distinct operations in Kenya. The VOA Nairobi-based East Africa bureau office supports both the English worldwide service and various Swahili and other stringers. The International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) has its Office of Marketing and Program Placement (OMPP) satellite office in Nairobi that works to promote VOA products and develop affiliate stations in Kenya, Tanzania, and Somalia who will rebroadcast VOA programs. IBB's Office of Engineering and Technical Services (OETS) transmits from a facility 30 kilometers outside of Nairobi.

Kenya is a dynamic country with many natural and human resources. It is a regional hub for many commercial, political, and developmental initiatives. It has a democratic government and a lively civil society. It is also a developing country wracked with problems of crime, corruption, disease, and poverty. According to both UN and U.S. Embassy statistics, 50 percent of Kenya's population lives below the poverty line, and per capita income is less than \$2.00 per day. English is the common language of affairs in the country and the language of instruction in the schools. Unfortunately, the educational system is in decline, and English language skills are declining with it.

Freedom of expression is on the rise. There are many print publications, but most have the resources for only limited distribution. Even the two major national dailies are hard to find outside of urban areas. The quality of print journalism is uneven. There are private and public television channels, but entertainment and commercial interests dominate programming. Radio remains what most Kenyans can afford as a source of information. People listen to an expanding selection of FM stations in the urban areas, but in rural areas shortwave is still used where the FM footprint does not reach.

Few Kenyans have been able to afford home computers, but at work, in the schools, and at cafes, Internet presence is beginning to grow. Cell phones are everywhere and "texting" is spreading rapidly. Kenyan broadcasters speak of digital broadcasting in the near future. The leap to cell phones and Internet broadcasts may be happening already in neighboring Somalia, where the absence of any central control or earlier generation infrastructure and funding from the Somali diaspora are generating a fast-changing and creative media landscape.

Kenya and Kenyans' attitude towards the United States is important to the U.S. government as Kenya is the hub of a wide spectrum of U.S. interests in the region. The long-standing bilateral relationship with Kenya includes economic development, trade, cultural and educational exchange, and the development of democratic institutions. Kenya serves as a regional hub or lead partner in antiterrorism, antinarcotics, anti-HIV/AIDS, and pro-civil society initiatives. The large American medical presence, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Walter Reed Medical Research Unit, and the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief focuses on the control of diseases such as malaria, Rift Valley fever, and HIV/AIDS. The U.S. mission in Kenya hosts teams that are addressing U.S. policies and humanitarian concerns in Sudan and Somalia. VOA broadcasts help to inform the people of the region about these initiatives and about the American society that promotes them.

## VOICE OF AMERICA, EAST AFRICA BUREAU

### HUMAN RESOURCES

The East Africa bureau chief for VOA has been in and out of Kenya since 1998. In recent years she has covered combat situations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. She became the Nairobi bureau chief in June, 2002. Since 2003, there has been an agreement between the Department of State and the BBG that VOA correspondents, even those based in-country, do not come under chief of mission authority. Thus, the bureau chief can cover events in Somalia, and be exempt from ordered departure orders for U.S. government employees.

One of the two local positions is for a senior information specialist with duties as both news assistant to the correspondent and cashier for the office. The other is strictly administrative (information assistant/office manager). The senior local employee (LE Staff, Grade 9) recently retired, and the junior office manager (LE Staff, Grade 8), who began with the office as a contractor in 1997, has taken on many of the duties of both positions. He is also the most frequent driver of the bureau vehicle and keeps a meticulous vehicle log. In spite of the vacancy in the office, the high energy of the bureau chief and the remaining locally employed staff, give the appearance that current staffing is adequate for the time being. However, the office staffing lacks depth with that vacancy.

An American resident in Kenya had been on contract as the principal stringer of the bureau since 2003. She came to the bureau office almost every day, had access to the office, and during the absence of the bureau chief carried the bulk of the bureau reporting. Her contract required her to produce roughly 20 reports per month as directed by the bureau correspondent, VOA assignments editors in Washington, and on occasion, assignment editors in Hong Kong. Since the OIG team departed Nairobi, this regular stringer left the bureau, leaving the office with another problematic vacancy. The number of stringers who pass through the Nairobi office varies. They are hard to classify as “Nairobi’s” as they may do their freelance work for a number of different news services and move frequently across borders. Stringers for the English, Swahili, and other language services may use the facilities at different times but do not have the same access as the employees noted above.

## FACILITIES AND SECURITY

The bureau office is on the second floor of the Chester House office building in downtown Nairobi. Chester House had been, until a few years ago, the building where all the international media bureaus had their offices. It became rundown, however, and most commercial bureaus moved to a newer building a few blocks away. VOA could not afford the move. Fortunately new owners have upgraded the structure. Instead of news bureaus, the neighbors are now mostly studios of prominent artists. The building has security guards at the entrance to the wing in which VOA is located, and to the hallway. With the external improvements made by the new owners, the internal security upgrades made by the bureau chief with VOA Central News Division (VOA/CC) support, and the apparent absence of a need to be colocated with other bureaus, the facilities seem quite adequate.

The office consists of three large rooms which can be used as workspace for the correspondent, for two local employees, and for stringers. There are two small rooms set up as studios. They were undergoing an upgrade at the time of the inspection. One of them holds the office safe. There is a room/closet off the correspondent's office where supplies and equipment waiting for disposal are kept.

The bureau chief, with support and funding from VOA/CC, put in a new, more secure, door to the office, Mylar-sealed double-glazed windows, air conditioning, and external window covers. She removed the external Voice of America sign that could have attracted attention. The new door is accessible only with a special electronic key card. The staff feels safe from forced entry through the door or random objects thrown through the windows.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT:

VOA/CC Washington supervises the bureau, but it gets its financial support through the Paris office and for news, especially for the English service, the chain of command runs through the VOA London office. The bureau chief is attentive to management issues and is ably supported by the LE staff information assistant/office manager. The bureau's estimated FY-07 operating budget is \$176,557. The LE staff salaries are budgeted at approximately \$52,000, and the balance is for general operating expenses. This budget is not static and has risen and fallen with changes in staff and other expenses. It appeared to the OIG team to be adequate for all bureau operations.





## AFFILIATE ACTIVITY: OFFICE OF MARKETING AND PROGRAM PLACEMENT

The OMPP office in Johannesburg, South Africa, administered by its regional marketing officer, oversees IBB marketing and affiliation in Kenya. OMPP has a contract regional marketing representative based in Nairobi, who has responsibility for Kenya, Tanzania, and Somalia.

The regional marketing representative has been on contract for just over one year, works out of his home office and car, and is an energetic promoter of BBG products. He is learning to deal with the challenges of representing a government-run bureaucracy in a competitive private sector environment. Given the number of approvals that each step of the affiliation process takes, he has suggested that instead of the three-step process that involves a “deal sheet,” a memorandum of understanding, and then a contract, that the middle step be eliminated in order to go to contract before a station loses interest or is won by another international broadcaster. The OMPP Affiliate Proposal form still in use requires not only clearance from the regional marketing officer in the field, but also from the two most senior officers of OMPP in Washington, the Executive Director of IBB, and a representative of the BBG itself. At the discretion of the regional marketing officer, the process can be simplified, and the senior Washington signatures no longer required, but multiple clearances still slow the process.

**Recommendation 2:** The International Broadcasting Bureau should assess the impact of the current affiliation process on the effectiveness of its field representatives and, in consultation with the office of the General Counsel and the Contract Office, determine whether a simplified process such as a permission to rebroadcast agreement can be implemented. (Action: IBB)

Together the regional marketing officer and regional marketing representative have made successful visits in the region. A September 2006 visit to Tanzania led to new affiliations in Zanzibar where American programming has been notably difficult to establish.

OMPP coordinates with the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi on issues relating to the 24/7 VOA FM frequency (107.5) which has been on the air for five years. OMPP affiliates in Kenya include radio stations owned by Royal Media Services which broadcast VOA Swahili in eight cities on its Citizen FM network; the chain's Hot FM in Nairobi carries VOA English-to-Africa programming. The national service, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation's Channel One, carries the VOA TV-to-Africa program, "Straight Talk Africa."

Somalia is of increasing interest to Washington. On February 13, 2007, after a 13-year hiatus, VOA Somali transmission began from Djibouti. Kenya's Frontier FM now carries VOA Somali programs and news clips. OMPP has agreements with stations in Somalia, Horn Afrik and Radio Daljir, to program VOA products such as Special English, Straight Talk Africa, and Africa Journal, in addition to news offerings. STV in Nairobi carries VOA's TV-to-Africa in the English-to-Africa service and World Wide English acquired television programming.

In the coastal area of Kenya with its large Muslim population, Baraka FM is trying to reach a Muslim audience, and OMPP is providing it with VOA news products in Swahili and English. Recent OMPP negotiations with Capital FM, a multi-market, English-language network, and Radio Lake Victoria FM have resulted in the installation of equipment with the new affiliates.

## TRANSMISSION FACILITIES

The Office of Engineering and Technical Services (OETS) is responsible for transmission facilities in Africa. BBG's two kilowatt FM transmitter in the Limuru Hills, 30 kilometers from Nairobi, provides VOA broadcasts in English to local audiences 24/7. Unfortunately, the transmission has been interrupted on several occasions in recent years, which has illustrated further communications problems within the BBG community and discouraged potential audience members.

When the FM 107.5 frequency was won for VOA 24/7 broadcasting in Kenya, BBG planned a downtown transmitter tower with line of sight to all parts of the city and suburbs. However, the government of Kenya dictated that all nongovernment of Kenya broadcasters relocate outside of Nairobi. BBG, and other international broadcasters, found the Limuru hills outside of town to be a good venue from which to transmit. BBG negotiated a hosting agreement with Nation Radio/TV which had a transmission facility in that area. BBG broadcasts began in June 2001. Immediately, BBG received reports of poor reception in parts of Nairobi. This was due to frequency licensing limitations on the strength of the signal and the antenna system that they were directed to use. The BBG antenna system was struck by lightning in May 2002. The resulting damage impacted broadcasting and required replacement antenna components.

BBG contracted with a well-regarded local contractor, B.A.T.L., which sold and maintained Crown equipment, for operation and maintenance. To expedite support, BBG decided to procure and install a Crown transmitter instead of Harris equipment which is standard for BBG. When B.A.T.L. went out of business, problems developed with the Crown equipment. The two kilowatt transmitter had to be shut down. OETS had to rely on a leased one kilowatt back-up. This reduction of power further aggravated an already poor reception in parts of central Nairobi and was the primary cause of listener complaints at the time that the inspection team was in Nairobi. The two kilowatt transmitter has been repaired since the OIG team left Nairobi, is now back in service, but is still not at full power.

BBG is in the process of relocating its broadcast transmission facility to a new tower/facility built by Broadcast Solutions International at Limuru. BBG will install a Harris two kilowatt transmitter and a new antenna system that should substantially improve the broadcast signal into Nairobi if buildings and other terrain features do not interfere in a given neighborhood. Personnel from the BBG Botswana and Morocco transmitting stations will oversee the installation, with operations which were due to begin during the summer of 2007. With delays and the closing of the Morocco station under discussion at the time of this report, it is important that BBG complete this transmission upgrade.

**Recommendation 3:** The Bureau of Broadcasting Governors should follow through on the plan, already in process, to establish a new transmission capability that will improve the signal strength of Voice of America broadcasts to downtown Nairobi and keep Broadcasting Board of Governors elements and Embassy Nairobi informed of progress. (Action: BBG)

The existing temporary transmitter that is well outside of Nairobi belongs to a private network and various permissions are needed to access the facility. Therefore, the OIG team did not make a physical inspection of the transmitter

Shortwave listening audiences in Kenya should also be able to hear VOA broadcasts in the following languages from the BBG transmitting sites indicated below:

- English, French, and Swahili from Moepeng Hill, Botswana.
- Amharic, English, French, and Swahili from Sao Tome.
- Afan Oromo, English, and French from Briech, Morocco.
- English from Udorn, Thailand.
- Tigrigna from Iranawila, Sri Lanka.

## EMBASSY COOPERATION

Although VOA policy is to remain independent of embassies abroad, the Nairobi bureau chief is very pleased with the level of cooperation from the embassy when cooperation is needed. The BBG entities rely little on few embassy services. In Nairobi, the BBG pays for International Cooperative Administrative Support Services for personnel (the two Kenyan VOA bureau office staff positions are paid as LE staff through the embassy human resources office), mail and messenger services, security, and vouchering. The correspondent has easy access and exchanges with the embassy information officer and public affairs officer. The bureau is invited to embassy press events. The correspondent is very positive about the Ambassador's efforts to reach out to the media. She gets periodic alerts of security issues from the regional security office, and in the course of the deadly crime wave sweeping the country, she attends the Ambassador's town hall meetings for the nonofficial American community. The OMPP regional marketing representative comes to the public affairs office to receive and send promotional materials and equipment. OMPP reports that the embassy has been supportive in helping them arrange high-level meetings for visiting BBG marketing officials.

There was an incident some months ago when a VOA stringer, in the absence of the bureau chief, "crashed" an off-the-record evening event with the Ambassador and attempted to violate the no recording policy. This gaffe was quickly resolved, and relations between the bureau and the embassy remain excellent.

In 2006, the embassy invited VOA English-to-Africa editor and TV personality Shaka Ssali to be a keynote speaker at a regional media symposium on the role of the media in a multi-party democracy in East Africa. The symposium brought together many journalists from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda with observers from Madagascar and Ethiopia. The symposium was financed by the embassy and the U.S. International University in Kenya and provided a unique opportunity to speak on the values of freedom of the press in an emerging democratic culture in Africa.



## PROGRAM IMPACT

BBG programs in East Africa face competition from many directions. The Kenyan audience has a growing number of radio and television options: public and private, domestic and international. BBG directs what resources it can to understanding this audience in commissioned research like the exhaustive May 2005 review of the changing Kenyan media scene by Intermedia cited below. OETS works to assure quality transmission to the region. In spite of this effort, the sense in the Kenya-based community of potential listeners, affiliates, and advocates of American broadcasting was that more analysis needed to be done, a stronger signal needed to be produced for BBG products, and changes in programming needed to be made to have a real impact in Kenya.

## THE NEED TO ADVERTISE

In the course of the inspection, the OIG team asked a small sample of Kenyan employees of BBG entities, the embassy, and nongovernmental organizations about their perceptions of, and experience with, BBG programming. In most of these discussions, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is immediately identified as the major competitor for VOA English or Swahili. The BBC has a well-established position in Kenyan media, invests in a lively marketing campaign, and keeps revising its programming to provide what the local audience wants.

Even the British Swahili and English broadcasters must work hard to keep their lead among foreign broadcasters. Al Jazeera just got a major placement on Nation TV. China Radio International has been increasing its audience, and has a time slot with the Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation. The OIG team visited religious radio station operators on the Muslim coast that were promoting their stations aggressively. Islamist media interests from the Gulf and South Asia are said to be offering programs and financial support. In addition to the international broadcasters, there are said to be over 100 Swahili stations to choose from. Kenyans have switched to FM radio and like to browse.

The most recent audience survey commissioned by IBB and executed by Inter-media (International Broadcasting in Kenya; Audience Analysis and Market Profile, April-May 2005, National Survey Report 291/05) shows that of the Kenyan adult radio audiences listening to programs in any language, 8.8 percent listen to VOA English, against the BBC's 30.5 percent. In Swahili, VOA is heard by 6.9 percent against the BBC's 25.5 percent. While the BBC is in the lead among the international broadcasters, its overall radio market share has declined over the years as the options in the Kenyan media market have blossomed.

All stations, and especially the BBC, rent billboards in and around major cities, print program schedules in newspapers, and pay for attractive advertisements in major newspapers directing listeners to their frequencies. The BBC has a program that takes on and trains interns from the local media. This initiative gives the British local youth input and develops a local network. IBB affiliates report that aggressive BBC marketers pay numerous visits to their affiliates and recently had tried to get one affiliate to bump a VOA placement with their latest Swahili program.

BBG entities are not funded to be as aggressive in their advertising or promotion. They rely on their affiliates to advertise. When frequencies change or when signal strength varies, which happens in both short wave and FM bands, if those changes are not advertised widely, VOA loses listeners who have not heard about the changes.

**Recommendation 4:** The Broadcasting Board of Governors should decide to either increase promotional funds for the Voice of America Kenyan market or accept a low market share and plan to address limited communication with the Kenyan audience. (Action: BBG)

## THE NEED TO LOCALIZE

Listeners in the media community and potential affiliates comment that the pace of VOA programming has been slow, the language stilted, and the stories too long. The most frequent criticism that the OIG team heard of VOA programming was that it does not have an East African focus. VOA Swahili wins praise as dependable, but gets criticism for not having changed its format in years. Informants praise the lighter, livelier style that the BBC Swahili has made its trademark. The BBC has captured much of the market by localizing its coverage. It has been particularly good at

sports reporting addressed to a Kenyan audience. The OIG team heard the example that when the African Union met in Nairobi, the BBC reports all began with that event. VOA led with news from Iraq. Most Kenyans are more interested in Kenya than Iraq. Affiliate station owners have complained that this discourages sponsors from wanting their commercials programmed alongside a VOA timeslot. It could be that informants were making an unfair comparison between worldwide VOA international news, not the Africa services, and the British news programming directed just at East Africa. Unfortunately, the story was retold by several Kenyans who believed that it was common to all VOA programming to ignore local interests.

VOA leadership has often heard the critiques about the slow pace, dated language, long presentations, tedious content, and failure to localize. Many journalists in VOA feel that their mandate is to present news and useful information, not to entertain. There have, however, been cases where VOA did localize its news coverage and did increase the proportion of music and sports and saw its ratings improve markedly. In Angola, while there was U.S. Agency for International Development funding, the service did turn to a livelier format and got larger audiences. A newer, livelier format is working in French to Central Africa and in the Zimbabwe project where VOA has actually passed the BBC in the ratings. The BBG 2002-2007 Strategic Plan, *Marrying the Mission to the Market*, has recognized this challenge. It called for its broadcasters to “update outmoded formats and programs.” The Strategic Plan includes among its goals the injunction to “Go local in Content and Presence.”

VOA’s English to Africa has been changing its program format in the last year. There has been close cooperation with VOA/CC on this planning. They were able to tie their changes to what research had indicated. They are switching to shorter programs of local interest and more sports and music. Recent research in Ghana and Uganda indicate increased listenership subsequent to these changes.

On March 8, 2007, at the same time that the OIG team in Nairobi was hearing from listeners that there was a greater need for localized programming, the English to Africa Program Review was being held in Washington. Review participants from many offices in IBB and VOA noted that the service’s broadcasts were increasingly “targeted to African audiences” and has “increased its sports and music origins.” Thus the English to Africa programs had already begun to address the concerns that the OIG team was hearing about. A shift in the news programming has permitted the service to “devote most or all of its Headline Newscasts to stories of direct interest to African audiences,” and “now African stories nearly always lead the newscasts.”

On the negative side, research reports presented at the March 8 review drew on commissioned Intermedia surveys and noted the program changes begun in 2006. At the same time it reported “little evidence that listeners are aware of any change in format or content.” When researchers drew the attention of their interlocutors to newer programming like African Beat and Inquiry, the response was positive. “Audience size and characteristics are as likely driven by distribution, access and awareness of VOA’s existence as by content.” Both Kenyan interlocutors and the IBB-Intermedia research in neighboring Uganda concluded that many potential listeners, especially BBC listeners, were “unaware of VOA or unaware of how to access it.” This was taking place during the period when transmission of the 24/7 FM signal was weakened because of transmitter problems cited above. If potential audience members are not informed about improved VOA programming and reception through advertising, they will not tune in to listen.

**Recommendation 5:** The International Broadcasting Bureau should support language service efforts to make programming for East Africa more attractive to local audiences, and thereby comply with the Broadcasting Board of Governors Strategic Plan. The International Broadcasting Bureau should require more frequent updates on such factors as funding for advertising, audience surveys, and reception problems and involve Voice of America and International Broadcasting Bureau field offices in the discussion. (Action: IBB)

As part of its FY 2008 budget, the BBG has proposed cuts in VOA’s English language service, part of the Language Programming Division, and worldwide English features and the music service, which are part of the VOA Central Programming Division. This comes as English to Africa is looking to the redesigned 24/7 FM operations as its future. English to Africa produces targeted African programming but not enough for 24/7 programming. Seventy percent of the round-the-clock content relies on the products of the same English language and music services which are proposed to be cut.

**Recommendation 6:** Voice of America’s Central Programming and Language Programming divisions should develop a plan to address the contradiction inherent in advancing the initiative of establishing a dynamic 24/7 English to Africa program while eliminating the English language services which provide the bulk of its content. (Action: VOA)

## THE NEED FOR MORE ANALYSIS

IBB's offices of research and performance review, directly and through contractors, do highly professional studies of VOA programs and of audience reach around the world. The OIG inspection of the BBG Performance Review unit concluded, in 2006, that much of that office's research is not used for decisionmaking and that the reports on listenership, the results of focus groups, or monitoring transmissions often do not get to all interested parties who could use them in making informed decisions. Discussions in Kenya, in BBG program reviews, and with language service offices in Washington confirmed these conclusions. The research, engineering, broadcasting, editing, and marketing staffs in Washington come together for the annual performance reviews in Washington for each language service. The results of these reviews are not shared with any consistency with the VOA, BBG, or embassy staff in the field who could benefit from the Washington discussion. There is more frequent exchange between OMPP and OETS as they work to assure that the audience receives a quality signal.

IBB also convokes focus groups and unique seven-person panels that evaluate the presentation and the content of language service programs. To meet the needs of the VOA Swahili service, the focus of the annual research effort alternates between Kenya and Tanzania – the two main target countries. The latest surveys focused on Kenya in 2005 and Tanzania in 2006. A new study was scheduled to start in Kenya in late May 2007. Advertising initiatives have been awaiting the return of the capacity to reach the intended audiences with the re-establishment of the two kilowatt transmitter in Limuru.

In the drive to develop a robust FM 24/7 English to Africa presence, VOA Swahili has faced new challenges. The service has a tight budget and no TV or Internet presence, and it has been bumped from Nairobi's 107.5 FM frequency to make room for the English service. Now FM affiliates and shortwave are the only vehicles for reaching their audience. The Swahili service only broadcasts one hour of original programming each day. In that time it must produce content that will attract both the sophisticated audience of media-rich Nairobi and the larger rural population. Swahili also has a larger audience in Tanzania than in Kenya. Nairobi has only a fraction of the English and Swahili audience in the region, but it is an important fraction. The Swahili service has heard rumors of weak signals but has not received regular reports on that condition. They are looking forward to a new listenership survey scheduled for the coming year.

Given the changes that are being made in mid-2007 in programming, marketing, and transmission in East Africa, there is a need to coordinate these efforts and assess their impact as they relate to both the English and Swahili services. When the current transmission problems have been resolved, a wider audience will be able to hear and render opinions on VOA broadcasting in Kenya. At that point, the OMPP should initiate a broader marketing campaign, and the IBB Office of Performance Review should execute audience surveys and focus group analysis of the new format of English to Africa and the programming by the Swahili service.

**Recommendation 7:** The International Broadcasting Bureau should initiate an advertising campaign for both the English and Swahili services and follow up with assessments of the awareness of Voice of America programming, audience size and makeup, attractiveness of the product, and quality of the signal. (Action: IBB)

## THE NEED TO COMMUNICATE TRANSMISSION INFORMATION

Listeners in Nairobi reported to the OIG team that VOA's 24/7 station (107.5FM) was hard to find on the dial, that the signal was weak, and that it sometimes go off the air for as long as 30 minutes at a time. One inspector listened on radios in different offices and hotel rooms and, along with the regional marketing representative, listened to the station in different locations from a car radio. Of all the FM stations in the area, 107.5 FM was the weakest. As noted earlier in this report, OETS had been temporarily forced to use a weaker transmitter. OETS staff who maintain the transmission equipment respond to outage or exception reports, but the results are not widely communicated, and engineers in regional field offices only learn through an indirect route when the signal is down or weak. OETS was working to address this condition, but at the time of the inspection neither VOA Nairobi, the marketing representative, nor the embassy had seen a report on these transmission problems in Kenya. Thus, there was no public announcement when the quality of the reception changed, nor an announcement of planned improvements. The OETS office that monitors transmission has a very sophisticated computer-based shortwave and medium wave (AM) system that includes East Africa. But there is very little monitoring of FM. Most FM VOA broadcasting is done via the affiliates who do their own monitoring and are supposed to report issues to OMPP.

It would be impractical to assume that BBG could staff round the clock monitoring of all its services, particularly FM, with its many affiliates. In many cases the same people who do transmitter maintenance are tasked with making periodic spot checks of reception, but that does not amount to 24/7 monitoring.

In different countries, BBG stringers or embassy LE staff may be asked to do random monitoring of FM. If a stringer, a correspondent at the bureau, an embassy official, or the marketing representative becomes aware of a transmission problem, there is an established procedure to inform responsible parties to take action. They should send messages through the OMPP marketing representative to the appropriate language service which then contacts the OETS Network Control Center. The center in turn informs the appropriate engineering team. In Nairobi, the LE staff office manager contacted the OMPP regional marketing representative or the regional marketing officer in Johannesburg each time he got a report of a bad signal, but few embassy staffers or other VOA bureau employees with whom the OIG team has interacted were aware of this procedure.

OETS staff suggested that OMPP take on the responsibility for notifying audiences and BBG elements of transmission problems as OMPP's role is to attract affiliates and audiences. But OMPP staff responded that this added duty could be a burden given the limited staff allotted to it by IBB. Alerting the embassies and local marketing representatives would ensure that the people most concerned in seeing BBG programming succeed in Kenya would have the information they need to promote the product.

**Recommendation 8:** The Office of Marketing and Program Placement, in consultation with the International Broadcasting Bureau's Engineering Directorate, and the Voice of America's Central News Division and Language Programming Division, should establish a procedure for advising the Voice of America Correspondent, the Embassy Public Affairs Section, and the Marketing Representative in Nairobi when changes in frequency or quality take place. (Action: IBB)

When the new FM transmitter is installed in Nairobi, the monitoring of the 24/7 frequency should improve. A remotely operated system is to be installed which will monitor the signal and automatically supply on-air status and audio samples to Engineering Operations through the transmitting station in Morocco.

With stronger signals and a new program format, the 24/7 operation in Africa has great potential. The Africa language service chiefs agreed in 2006 that 24/7 FM programming was a success and should be supported. The Accra operation raised listenership from two percent to 12 percent of the market. OMPP was very active, attracting attention to the enhanced offerings. It is often not clear to personnel executing the English to Africa 24/7 programs how strong the commitment is of IBB and VOA leadership to sustain and expand those programs.

VOA has six stations in Africa broadcasting its products 24/7. Its main international rival, the BBC, has over 60 such stations and is continuing to expand. Part of the British success in the region is traced to the fact that the BBC has equivalents of OMPP and OETS that are focused on each individual region and work with the regional services. The British initiative also has a budget assured for a three-year period. With a limited budget and staff vacancies, IBB's OMPP faces great challenges as a single marketing office serving a worldwide audience. Tying the marketing effort more closely to the regional audiences could focus more regional resources on the effort.

The Booz, Allen, Hamilton study commissioned by the BBG in 2005-2006 concluded that marketing would be more effective if it was integrated better into the (regional) "business units" rather than centrally.<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence that BBG has responded to that advice. OMPP does have regional marketing offices, but they have operated independently of the program production in the region.

**Recommendation 9:** The Voice of America, in coordination with the Broadcasting Board of Governors should clarify support for the 24/7 operation by developing and implementing a strategy for maintaining and finding resources for this commitment and strengthening the connections among the marketing, transmission, and programming elements of East African operations. (Action: VOA, in coordination with BBG)

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<sup>1</sup>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. 97-103.

## THE NEED TO SHARE INFORMATION

The perception of Kenyan staff at the embassy and in BBG offices is that Washington is responsible for research and monitoring, but does not communicate its findings. The regional marketing officer in Johannesburg has seen the reports from Washington, but the regional marketing representative in Nairobi has not. In fact, to monitor the listening and viewing audiences, the regional marketing representative relies on commercial surveys by East African media monitors “Steadman” and “Consumer Insight.”

In Washington meetings before and after the inspection in Nairobi, the OIG team confirmed that highly professional research reports such as the IBB Office of Performance Review’s “Kenya Audience Analysis and Market Profile” of May 2005, the March 2006 performance review of English to Africa, and the results of transmission assessments can all be found on the IBB Intranet site. However, the reports are directed mostly to the offices that commissioned them and not announced to a wider government-funded audience outside of Washington.

BBG and mission elements in Kenya include a number of Americans and Kenyans with a sincere interest in seeing the United States broadcast the highest quality and most effective message to the peoples of the region. Within this community of professionals a sharing of reports and analysis done with U.S. government funds would help each to a more complete grasp of the prospects for public diplomacy in the region. Currently such sharing is not apparent but should be required.

**Recommendation 10:** The International Broadcasting Bureau should create and implement a structure through which Voice of America’s Central News Division and Language Programming Division (English to Africa and the Swahili Service) and the International Broadcasting Bureau’s Office of Performance Review, Office of Marketing and Program Placement, and the Office of Engineering and Technical Services share their reports of market analysis, placement efforts, and transmission quality among the field offices and American and senior local staff of the Office of Marketing and Program Placement, Voice of America bureaus, and embassy public affairs sections who are engaged in advancing the promotion of Broadcasting Board of Governors products in the region. (Action: IBB).

Thus far, Kenyan authorities have not obstructed foreign broadcasting. Recently, however, a Kenyan assistant information minister said that officials were considering following the lead of other countries in requiring that any foreign entity broadcasting within Kenyan borders do so from licensed studios inside the country. Some Kenyan legislators have also demanded that if the BBC or other foreign broadcasters like VOA want to broadcast in their country, that the Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation should be allowed to broadcast in those countries. Both OMPP and the U.S. Embassy are keeping a close watch on these developments since the Kenyan Ministry of Information publicly suggested canceling broadcast licenses for foreign broadcasters whose countries do not allow a reciprocal arrangement, citing specifically the BBC, VOA, and China Radio International.

The OIG team informally recommended that OMPP and Embassy Nairobi discuss how to address any effort to change licensing practices by the Kenyan government and prepare a plan of action should changes be made.

## FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** Voice of America Central News Division, in coordination with the Voice of America Nairobi bureau, should identify a procedure for the disposal or destruction of obsolete or defective equipment without incurring the cost of commercial shipping to the United States. (Action: VOA).

**Recommendation 2:** The International Broadcasting Bureau should assess the impact of the current affiliation process on the effectiveness of its field representatives and, in consultation with the office of the General Counsel and the Contract Office, determine whether a simplified process such as a permission to rebroadcast agreement can be implemented. (Action: IBB)

**Recommendation 3:** The Bureau of Broadcasting Governors should follow through on the plan, already in process, to establish a new transmission capability that will improve the signal strength of Voice of America broadcasts to downtown Nairobi and keep Broadcasting Board of Governors elements and Embassy Nairobi informed of progress. (Action: BBG)

**Recommendation 4:** The Broadcasting Board of Governors should decide to either increase promotional funds for the Voice of America Kenyan market or accept a low market share and plan to address limited communication with the Kenyan audience. (Action: BBG)

**Recommendation 5:** The International Broadcasting Bureau should support language service efforts to make programming for East Africa more attractive to local audiences, and thereby comply with the Broadcasting Board of Governors Strategic Plan. The International Broadcasting Bureau should require more frequent updates on such factors as funding for advertising, audience surveys, and reception problems and involve Voice of America and International Broadcasting Bureau field offices in the discussion. (Action: IBB)

**Recommendation 6:** Voice of America's Central Programming and Language Programming divisions should develop a plan to address the contradiction inherent in advancing the initiative of establishing a dynamic 24/7 English to Africa program while eliminating the English language services which provide the bulk of its content. (Action: VOA)

**Recommendation 7:** The International Broadcasting Bureau should initiate an advertising campaign for both the English and Swahili services and follow up with assessments of the awareness of Voice of America programming, audience size and makeup, attractiveness of the product, and quality of the signal. (Action: IBB)

**Recommendation 8:** The Office of Marketing and Program Placement, in consultation with the International Broadcasting Bureau's Engineering Directorate, and the Voice of America's Central News Division and Language Programming Division, should establish a procedure for advising the Voice of America Correspondent, the Embassy Public Affairs Section, and the Marketing Representative in Nairobi when changes in frequency or quality take place. (Action: IBB)

**Recommendation 9:** The Voice of America, in coordination with the Broadcasting Board of Governors should clarify support for the 24/7 operation by developing and implementing a strategy for maintaining and finding resources for this commitment and strengthening the connections among the marketing, transmission, and programming elements of East African operations. (Action: VOA, in coordination with BBG)

**Recommendation 10:** The International Broadcasting Bureau should create and implement a structure through which Voice of America's Central News Division and Language Programming Division (English to Africa and the Swahili Service) and the International Broadcasting Bureau's Office of Performance Review, Office of Marketing and Program Placement, and the Office of Engineering and Technical Services share their reports of market analysis, placement efforts, and transmission quality among the field offices and American and senior local staff of the Office of Marketing and Program Placement, Voice of America bureaus, and embassy public affairs sections who are engaged in advancing the promotion of Broadcasting Board of Governors products in the region. (Action: IBB).





PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Arrival Date</b>
VOA East Africa Bureau Chief	Alisha C. Ryu	06/02
IBB Office of Marketing and Program Placement, Regional Marketing Officer Johannesburg, South Africa	Paula Caffey	10/02
IBB Marketing Representative in Kenya	Wesley Maritim	09/05



## ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
FM	Frequency Modulation Radio
IBB	International Broadcasting Bureau
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
LE	Locally employed
OETS	IBB's Office of Engineering and Technical Services
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OMPP	Office of Marketing and Program Placement (IBB)
VOA	Voice of America
VOA/CC	Voice of America, Central News Division

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