



United States Department of State
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors

Office of Inspector General

FEB 20 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: IBB – Richard M. Lobo

FROM: OIG – Harold W. Geisel *R. Peterson for*

SUBJECT: Review of Broadcasting Board of Governors' Operations in Abuja, Nigeria,
ISP-IB-13-17

Executive Summary

Voice of America (VOA) radio broadcasts to Nigeria via affiliate stations are one of the few ways of maintaining communication with Nigerian populations. The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) was pursuing an aggressive marketing strategy that had produced several new programming affiliations despite restrictive broadcasting laws and increasing extremist violence in the country.

Purpose and Scope

In connection with the OIG inspection of Embassy Abuja, a public diplomacy inspector reviewed BBG operations in Nigeria. The onsite inspection took place on October 10, 2012.

Staffing

BBG does not have a broadcasting facility or direct-hire staff in Nigeria. VOA has four Nigerian contract stringers—three news stringers and one for health reporting—who report for the Hausa Language Service in the Kano area of northern Nigeria. The health stringer is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In addition to funding the health affairs stringer, USAID has also provided funding to support VOA health and education programming. For several years VOA maintained a small office in Kano, but with the sharp increase in violence in the region, the office was closed and the stringers must now work out of their homes.

BBG's Office of Strategy and Development (OSD) has a contract representative in Abuja who is responsible for marketing and placing VOA radio and television programs with affiliate stations throughout Nigeria.

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Transmission of Broadcasts

With a population of 170 million, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and seventh largest in the world. A 2012 Gallup study found that approximately 88 percent of Nigerians rely on radio broadcasts as their main source of news and information. A growing number of Nigerians receive radio broadcasts, as well as Internet, email, and social media services, from their mobile phones. This fact would normally provide an excellent market for VOA news broadcasts, except that a Nigerian federal law prohibits Nigerian radio and television stations from broadcasting live news feeds from foreign media. Under these conditions, all foreign broadcasters, including VOA and the British Broadcasting Company, in their broadcasting through Nigerian affiliate stations are limited to prerecorded discussion and cultural programs, but no live news. All live VOA English and Hausa language programs, including news, are broadcast from transmitting facilities outside of Nigeria.

Opportunities for Growth

At the time of the inspection, the OSD marketing representative was maintaining programming affiliations with 12 Nigerian radio stations, four TV stations, and one Internet radio station. These affiliations include several broadcasters in the critical northern regions of Nigeria that are predominantly Islamic. This is clear progress toward BBG's strategic goal of seizing targeted growth opportunities, particularly because U.S. mission personnel are not able to travel to most northern regions of the country because of steadily increasing Islamic extremist violence. VOA radio broadcasts to the region via affiliate stations are one of the few ways of maintaining communication with these important Nigerian populations but the increasing violence in Nigeria will make it difficult for BBG to reach its growth goal in the near future.

Administrative Issues

BBG does not maintain an office in Abuja and the marketing representative must work from his apartment. Although he pursues an aggressive marketing strategy that has produced several new affiliations in past months, he believes that not having an office limits his ability to develop new markets. A regional VOA representative has traveled to Abuja several times in recent months to explore the possibility of establishing an office.

The marketing representative reports excellent cooperation with the embassy, particularly with the public affairs section. VOA receives a number of support services, including pouch support for shipments of equipment, transportation, and logistical support to a growing number of temporary duty visits by regional VOA and marketing personnel. In the past, VOA subscribed

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to embassy ICASS services but terminated the subscription in 2005. The management section of the Embassy Abuja OIG inspection report includes a recommendation that the embassy determine whether BBG should become an ICASS subscriber.

Security Issues

The memorandum of understanding between the Department of State and BBG with respect to security services explicitly exempts VOA correspondents from chief of mission authority. Particularly in an environment where harassment and violence directed against journalists is common, the embassy can play a role in advising on security practices. The embassy regional security office does not engage with the VOA contract stringers.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this matter further, or your staff may contact Robert Peterson, Assistant Inspector General for Inspections, by email at

(b)(2)(b)(6)@state.gov or by telephone on (b)(2)(b)(6)

cc: Kelu Chao, Director, International Broadcasting Bureau
Barbara Tripp, Management Analyst, International Broadcasting Bureau

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