



June 12, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Andre Mendes, Interim Chief Executive Officer and Director, Broadcasting Board of Governors

FROM: Mark Mayfield, Acting Assistant Inspector General for Inspections, Office of Inspector General

SUBJECT: Limited-Scope Review, Broadcasting Board of Governors Operations in Tunis, Tunisia, ISP-IB-15-25

Executive Summary

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) found no issues that would warrant a recommendation in its limited-scope inspection of the proposed Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN) news bureau in Tunis. The inspection team found that the process of opening the bureau is moving forward but obtaining its operating license is taking longer than expected. The MBN news bureau in Tunis will support many of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) strategic goals.

Purpose, Scope, and Methodology

The purpose of the limited-scope review was to focus on the following areas: 1) raise work place and security issues to the level of BBG senior management's attention; 2) determine how the inspected entity is implementing BBG's strategic goals through its programming and addressing OIG-identified management challenges; 3) identify use of social media platforms; and 4) review the coordination among the inspected entity, U.S. embassy, and Voice of America (when appropriate).

The review took place in Tunis between February 23 and March 11, 2015, in connection with the OIG inspection of Embassy Tunis. The inspector conducted survey work in Washington, DC, in January and February 2015. The inspector conducted interviews with the proposed news bureau chief and one other journalist in Tunis who will be a part of the news bureau staff as well as with embassy personnel, including the U.S. Ambassador, the public affairs officer, and the information officer. The inspector also reviewed MBN documents, such as its briefing notes and budget plans.

This review was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by OIG.

Status and Rationale of New Bureau

MBN contracted a veteran journalist to become the lead correspondent for the proposed news bureau in Tunis. The news bureau will submit programming content for both MBN television and radio operations, also known as Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa. MBN submitted a license application for the bureau at the Tunisian Ministry of Trade late in 2014 and was awaiting approval at the time of the inspection. Working with a budget from MBN, the journalist has proposed several possible bureau locations in Tunis. MBN has plans for six employees to staff the bureau: three correspondents and three cameramen/editors.

BBG's FY 2014 budget provided a rationale for the future news bureau: to add capacity and programs targeting the Arab countries of North Africa, where Islamist insurgencies threaten regional peace and U.S. interests. The news bureau would respond to the challenges of extreme volatility in global affairs and the need to sustain a global information posture. The news bureau would also provide on-the-ground coverage to respond to the challenge of consolidating democracy in Tunisia. It would not engage in any social media activities.

Implementation of BBG Strategic Plan, Management Challenges, and Programming

The proposed bureau implements two of the five tactical steps in BBG's 5-year strategic plan goal #3, *Seize Targeted Growth Opportunities*, by reaching out to now underserved and underreached audiences of women and youth and by creating a country-specific content stream in their language. This would be achieved by providing national news and programs tailored to these audiences. The other, goal #4, *Prioritize Support for Democracy and Counter Pockets of Resistance*, would be achieved by focusing on countries faced with extremism—where accurate, credible news and information are lacking—and boosting service to these areas. Extremism in Tunisia was on display when a deadly terrorist attack on a national museum occurred several days after the inspection.

At this early stage in the process of establishing a bureau, the inspection team could not assess whether BBG has met any of the five management challenges listed in the Inspector General's Assessment of Management and Performance Challenges—Broadcasting Board of Governors. Such challenges—managing contracts and property management—will be subject to evaluation only after the future news bureau is operational.

Security and Relationship/Coordination with U.S. Embassy

BBG and embassy personnel interviewed did not raise any security issues.

Neither of the two journalists contracted to work at the bureau has had any contact with the embassy regarding the news bureau. In interviews with the Ambassador and embassy public affairs and press officers, the inspection team heard that BBG had not advised them of the opening of the news bureau. Nor has BBG consulted with the embassy regional security officer for his assistance on security matters. However, BBG has approved the bureau. BBG's Board includes a representative from the U.S. Department of State, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, who is aware of the news bureau in Tunis.

Robert Torres, Broadcasting Board of Governors Coordinator in the Office of Inspections, is available to discuss with you this memorandum report if you have any questions. He can be reached at 703-284-[redacted] (b) (6) or email [redacted] (b) (6)@state.gov.