



Broadcasting  
Board of  
Governors



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# global





## broadcasting in:

### Global

English  
(including  
*Special English &  
English to Africa*)

### Africa

Afan Oromo  
Amharic  
French to Africa  
Hausa  
Kinyarwanda  
Kirundi  
Ndebele  
Portuguese to Africa  
Shona  
Somali  
Swahili  
Tigrigna

### Central Asia

Kazakh  
Kyrgyz  
Tajik  
Turkmen  
Uzbek

### East Asia

Burmese  
Cantonese  
Indonesian  
Khmer  
Korean  
Lao  
Mandarin  
Thai  
Tibetan  
Uyghur  
Vietnamese

### Eastern/ Central Europe

Albanian  
Bosnian  
Croatian  
Greek  
Macedonian  
Montenegrin  
Romanian  
Serbian

### Eurasia

Armenian  
Avar  
Azerbaijani  
Bashkir  
Belarusian  
Chechen  
Circassian  
Crimean Tatar  
Georgian  
Russian  
Tatar  
Ukrainian

### Latin America

Creole  
Spanish

### Near East/ North Africa

Arabic  
Kurdish  
Turkish

### South Asia

Bangla  
Dari  
Hindi  
Pashto  
Persian  
Urdu

Cover: Alhurra Television's coverage of the U.S. elections drew praise for its balance and professionalism and attracted viewers such as this one in Sadr City in Baghdad. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)  
Left: Logging on in Jakarta, Indonesia (AFP Photo/Bay Ismoyo 2009); Right: Men listen to a battery-operated radio for the results of the country's elections in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe in March 2008. (AP Photo)



# impact





Cambodian election workers count the votes at a polling station south of Phnom Penh, July 2008. (AP Photo)

## From the Broadcasting Board of Governors

In compliance with Section 305(a) of Public Law 103-236, the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994, we, the members of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), are pleased to submit the BBG's annual report for 2008.

This report summarizes the activities of U.S. government-funded, civilian international broadcasting, encompassing the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, Radio Free Asia, Middle East Broadcasting Networks, and the International Broadcasting Bureau.

During 2008 BBG broadcasters continued to serve as vital sources of news and information and forums for civil discourse around the world. The year brought many challenges, including the ongoing war in Iraq, violence against protestors in Tibet, a devastating cyclone in Burma, economic deterioration in Zimbabwe and resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan – all triggering government crackdowns on the media and highlighting the fragility of press freedom around the world.

The BBG's 2008-2013 Strategic Plan emphasizes our dedication to promoting freedom and democracy and enhancing understanding through the broadcast of accurate news and information. The plan renews our commitment to engaging strategic audiences in dialogue using the most effective broadcast technologies.

This means expanding use of new media and Internet broadcasting to reach younger and more diverse audiences, utilizing popular media such as satellite

television in well-established markets like Iran, and capitalizing on proven delivery platforms such as shortwave and medium wave (AM) radio to reach isolated places such as North Korea. From Alhurra Television's new online streaming video to VOA and RFA's presence on the microblogging site Twitter, new technologies are providing our audiences more ways to find and interact with BBG content.

The BBG and its talented and dedicated broadcasters are committed to carrying out our mission by providing people around the world news and information that offers a window to America and to their own societies. As detailed in the pages that follow, we strive to protect and promote the fragile institution of a free press around the world, without which democracy and civil society cannot flourish.

### Our Mission:

**To promote freedom and democracy and enhance understanding through multimedia communication of accurate, objective, and balanced news, information and other programming about America and the world to audiences overseas.**

## Strategic Plan

The agency's 2008-2013 strategic plan affirms objective journalism as the BBG's core activity and emphasizes the continuing importance of broadcasting in a world where extremism and authoritarianism militate daily against freedom and democracy. The plan's implementation strategies are the steps the BBG needs to take to accomplish its mission. These include:



- Enhance program delivery across all relevant platforms.
- Build on BBG reach and impact within Muslim societies.
- Help audiences understand the principles and practices of democratic, free and just societies.
- Employ modern communication techniques and technologies.
- Facilitate citizen discourse.
- Engage the world in conversation about America.
- Develop and motivate the agency's workforce to meet the changing conditions of U.S. international broadcasting.
- Optimize broadcasting operations.
- Preserve credibility and ensure overall programming excellence.
- Broaden cooperation within U.S. Public Diplomacy.

BBG broadcasters and program oversight and support services – the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB-Radio and TV Marti), Radio Free Asia (RFA), the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN-Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa), and the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) – achieved significant progress on their strategic goals in 2008.

The United States election cycle provided rich material for BBG broadcasters to engage the world in conversation about America and explain the democratic process. BBG coverage of ongoing stories as well as flashpoints around the globe demonstrated the responsiveness and professionalism of its skilled reporters and their ability to utilize new media strategies to reach key audiences.

Left: VOA Croatian Service broadcaster Ivica Puljic at the Democratic National Convention.

Right: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (R) in the studio with RFE/RL's Radio Farda's Golnaz Esfandiari and Mossadegh Katouzian (L).



# OVERVIEW

## Online Media Challenges and Opportunities

Two panel discussions coordinated by the BBG this year explored the challenges and opportunities inherent in the rise of new media. The increasing sophistication of web censorship by authoritarian governments creates significant challenges, according to panelists at the BBG's September workshop on censorship in the Internet age. Several speakers highlighted the struggle inside China, one of the world's most sophisticated censors, where technology allows the government to create an illusion of openness while still exerting control by filtering specific content.

A second panel discussion, co-sponsored with George Washington University, focused on the role of new media in international news coverage, discussing the impact of mainstream media's retrenchment from foreign reporting. Stepping in to fill some of the void are citizen journalists, armed with cell phones, text messages, small digital cameras and blogs, according to the panelists, who focused discussion on human

rights reporting to mark the 60th Anniversary of the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights.

Audio and video of both discussions are available on demand at [www.bbg.gov](http://www.bbg.gov).

The BBG is rapidly adapting to this new environment by increasing its focus on new media to capitalize on the opportunities for news gathering and dissemination presented by these platforms. We are also stepping up anti-censorship efforts by partnering with NGOs, human rights groups and universities.

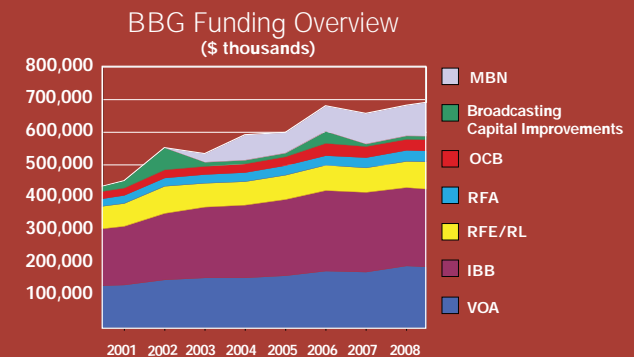
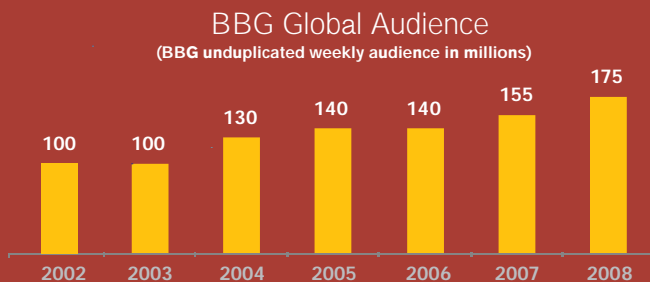
## Management Improvements and Efficiencies

In this dynamic media environment, the BBG continued to regularly assess the effectiveness of its transmission technologies and resources to serve priority audiences, matching evolving media preferences to meet new programming requirements. The BBG shifted certain broadcast resources from shortwave to more popular media such as AM, FM, TV and Internet where appropriate.

New technology also helped improve efficiency during 2008. The BBG implemented a new financial management system to improve financial and procurement processes, as well as new data and content management systems to improve the sharing of news and information between BBG languages and media.

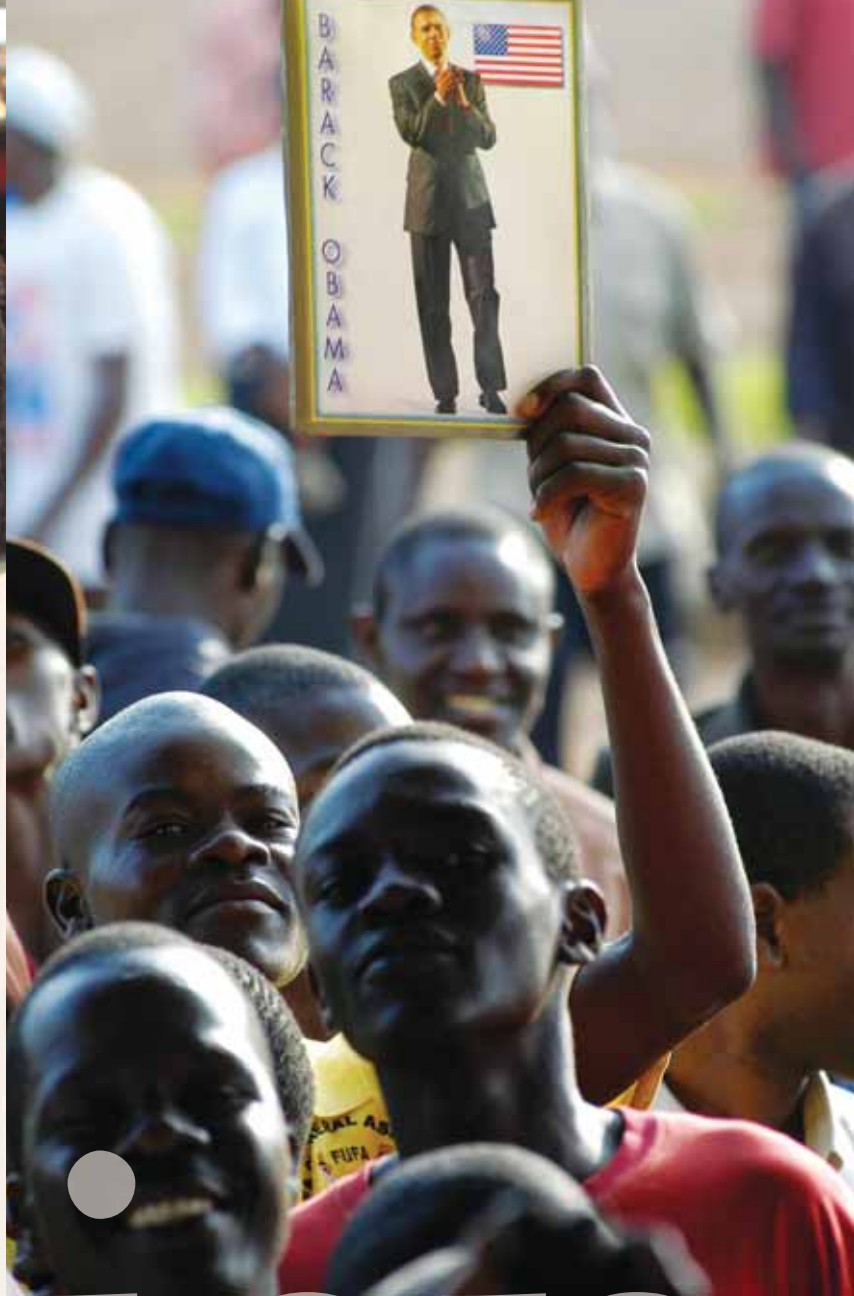
In July, responsibility for production of all Radio Farda broadcasts to Iran, which had been a VOA and RFE/RL joint venture since the station was launched in 2002, was consolidated under RFE/RL.

Independent auditors gave the BBG an unqualified "clean" opinion for the fifth straight year, reflecting the Agency's strong management and performance standards. Further information on the Agency's financial statement and performance standards can be found on page 46 of this report and online at [www.bbg.gov](http://www.bbg.gov).



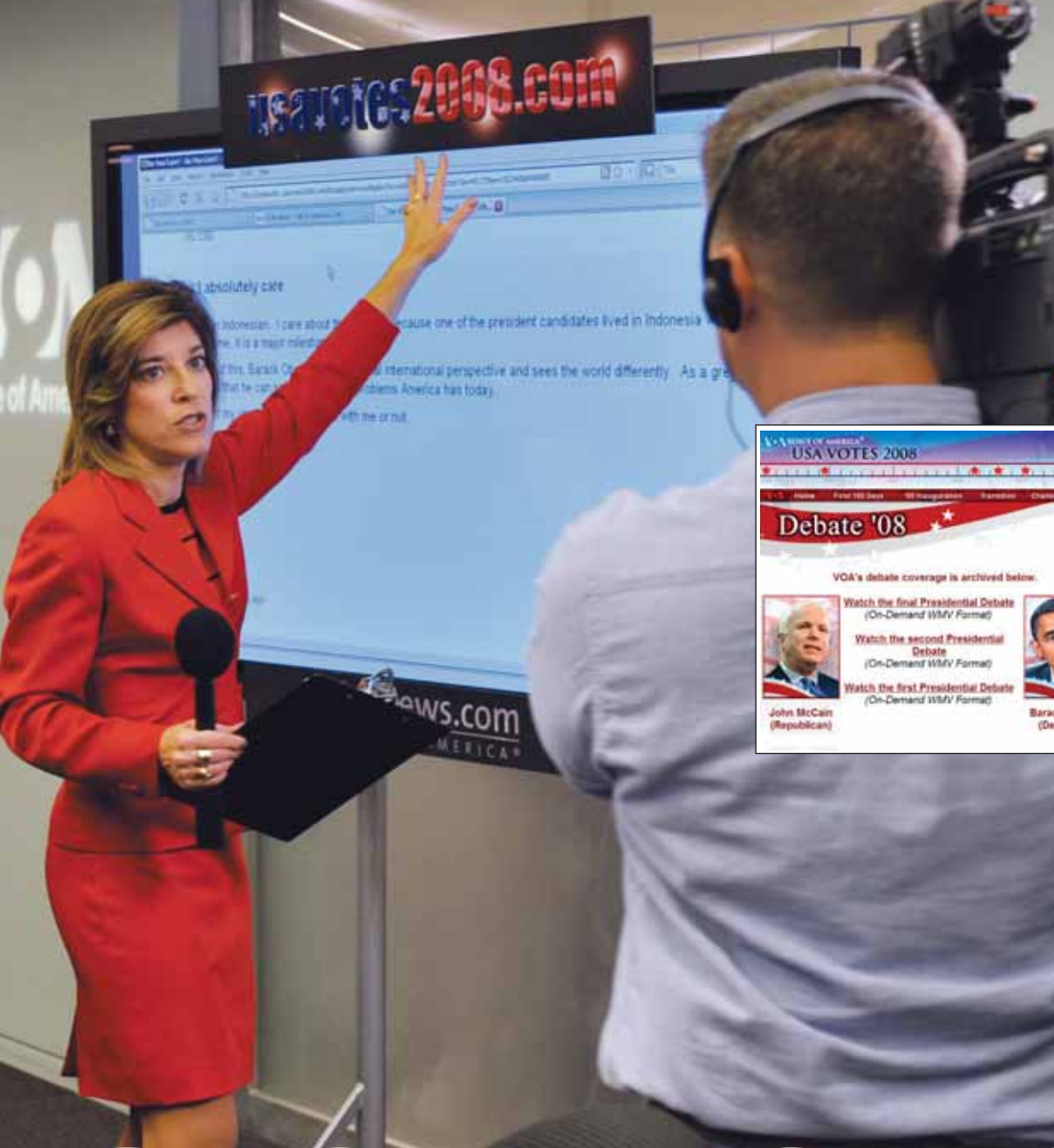
**The BBG is an independent federal agency that oversees a network of government and non-government media organizations broadcasting in 60 languages to a worldwide weekly audience of over 175 million people.**





# election





**BBG broadcasters** responded to the unprecedented global interest in the U.S. presidential election by providing unmatched multimedia and comprehensive coverage from the Iowa caucuses to the party conventions to the victory and concession speeches. Much of the coverage was live with simultaneous translations. The election provided rich opportunities to fulfill several key strategic goals for U.S. international broadcasting by engaging the world in conversation about America, explaining the democratic process to audiences in authoritarian or closed societies, and facilitating global discourse using interactive programs and technologies.

VOA's USAVotes2008 Web site epitomized the interactivity of election coverage, by using blogs, discussion boards and quizzes to create an online community. It successfully attracted visitors from over 150 countries within its first week.

Multilingual reporting gave audiences comprehensive explanations of how the American election process works, starting from the party primaries and continuing through the transition. VOA, RFE/RL, Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa sent reporters to early primary and caucus states.

VOA's Pashto-language Deewa Radio, broadcasting to the volatile and strategically vital border region of Pakistan and Afghanistan, carried comments from callers from Pakistan and the Gulf region comparing the election process in the United States to that of their own countries in a special call-in show on Super Tuesday. A fifteen-part VOA TV series



From left to right: (1) VOA reporter Guita Mirsaedi interviews a delegate on the floor of the Republican National Convention; (2) Kenyans and Africans across the continent celebrated then Senator Barack Obama's victory on November 5, 2008. (AP Photo/Riccardo Gangale); (3) VOA reporter Carolyn Presutti discusses viewer e-mail in real time television coverage on election night; (4) VOA's interactive election Web site USAvotes2008.com.

# coverage

**“ I have not understood before how ordinary people got engaged in the democratic process. I love your program about the convention. You are the best and no other television is like you when it comes to educating and making us understand America and the world. ”**

*E-mail from a Middle Eastern viewer praising Alhurra Television's coverage of the conventions.*

entitled *How America Votes* clarified the complexities of the U.S. election process.

Alhurra Television broadcast a new roundtable discussion program *Road to the White House* live from cities across the country, explained the electoral process and examined the issues affecting the 2008 presidential elections. Alhurra Television's "America Votes" segment in its primetime news-casts covered a broad range of topics including interviews with political experts; stories on the influence of the media and lobbying groups; and coverage of campaign issues such as education, the war on terror and the economy.

In-depth background reports on speakers, interviews with top officials and discussions of issues of special importance, such as U.S. foreign policy, offered audiences keen insights at the Democratic and Republican national conventions. VOA, Radio and TV Marti, and Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa provided live daily coverage with simultaneous translation of key speeches.

Alhurra Television's convention preview program during the Republican and Democratic conventions, and its feature stories on Arab-American views of significant election topics, enhanced understanding of issues.

Audiences, especially in Kenya, Indonesia and Vietnam, with connections to the candidates' lives, were thirsty for extensive and comprehensive coverage. For example, VOA Swahili staged interactive specials at the political conventions with local affiliate stations Citizen Radio and Radio Free Africa. Interviews throughout the election, such as VOA Mandarin's interviews with Chinese-American city council members in California, resonated with audiences overseas.

On Election Day, correspondents provided reports from locations throughout the U.S. and the world, fueling reporting



understanders



such as Alhurra Television's 30 hours of continuous live coverage for Arabic-speaking audiences.

In addition to non-stop coverage in English from the time the polls closed to the end of the victory speech, VOA language services produced special programming and live reports for the election. For example, VOA Urdu co-produced nine hours of Election Day programming with Pakistan state broadcaster PTV and placed hourly reports with state radio broadcaster PBC. Seven national television stations and two major radio stations carried VOA Indonesian programming live. VOA's Mandarin Service Web site drew more than 55,000 visits –most from inside China–within the first 24 hours of President-elect Obama's acceptance speech.

Other coverage was wide-ranging and included Radio and TV Martí features on Congressional races for seats held or contested by Cuban-Americans. Leading dissident Osvaldo Paya Sardiñas participated in the Martí programming from Havana and spoke about the historical meaning of the elections and implications for U.S. policy on Cuba.

Experts in RFE/RL's target countries provided analysis of what to expect if either candidate won. RFA focused heavily on explaining the democratic election to listeners whose home media is so restricted that they have little information on the process and drew record online traffic with its Vietnamese language *Road to the White House* reporter's diary.

Senator John McCain's concession speech, carried live to many viewers and listeners, was a watershed moment. In countries where peaceful democratic transitions are rare or unheard of, watching the losing candidate concede defeat and gracefully congratulate the winner was a unique experience.

There was an outpouring of audience reaction, including calls to RFE/RL's Kazakh language service, reflecting listeners' excitement over the election of an African-American and their admiration for the American democratic process. One message to President-elect Obama sent to VOA's Persian News Network Web site read, "I wish there were at least one media outlet in Iran that could express the joy of Iranians for you. We love America and we respect this great democracy."

**“ I am the same age and color of Barack Obama. Yet look at how far he has risen, and I am here in Cuba unable to enjoy the opportunities of a free society. ”**

*Cuban independent journalist Jorge Olivera reacting to the election of Barack Obama*

From left to right: (1) VOA Macedonian's Jane Bojadzievski reports on protesters outside of the Republican National Convention; (2) Alhurra Television's correspondent Ahmed Sanad explains the Electoral College to viewers on Election night; (3) VOA Radio Deewa's Iftikhar Hussain interviews candidate Ron Paul; (4) VOA Persian News Network's Siamak Deghanpour and Setareh Derakhshesh anchor the nightly news live from the Democratic National Convention; (5) VOA Swahili reporter Abdushakur Aboud reporting for TV Africa at the Republican National Convention; (6) Puspita Sariwati, of VOA's Indonesian service, broadcasting on election night; (7) VOA's Jim Malone and Doug Bernard analyze election night results as they come in; (8) VOA Web desk, live chat program *Talk to America* (T2A) staff and program guests keep people around the world informed on election night.



tanouling



CRISIS COV





“ It’s troubling that many of the Burmese people learned of this impending disaster only when foreign media outlets such as **Radio Free Asia & Voice of America** sounded the alarm. ”

*First Lady Laura Bush at a press conference on May 5, 2008.*

Throughout a tumultuous year, BBG broadcasters excelled while covering political and social conflicts around the world, providing millions of people with comprehensive information in their own languages they would not have been able to get from their local media.

In December, Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa pre-empted regular programming to include extensive live news coverage of the conflict in Gaza. During the crisis, Alhurra Television shifted to an extended news-only format to give viewers the most up-to-date information on the conflict.

During the November terrorist attack in Mumbai, India VOA provided uninterrupted coverage of events as they unfolded, including on-the-ground coverage from stringers, interviews in Pakistan and India, and live call-in shows. VOA Hindi reported through its affiliate, Zee TV, providing reactions from President Bush, President-elect Obama, experts

erage

(1) Alhurra Television extended news coverage to update viewers during the December violence in Gaza. (AP Photo/Maan Images, Hatem Omar); (2) Campaigners outside the Zimbabwean Embassy in the Strand, London, protest the disputed presidential election in June 2008. (Press Association via AP Images); (3) Children await food following the devastation of Cyclone Nargis in Burma, covered extensively by VOA and RFA. (AP Photo)

and Indian-American community leaders. VOA Urdu's comprehensive, live radio coverage included correspondent reports from eight cities.

Coverage of the continuing conflict in Afghanistan included VOA's original reporting in November on the Taliban massacre of 27 youths mistaken for army recruits in the Maiwand district of Kandahar Province. VOA's groundbreaking interview with the only survivor revealed that all those killed were from poor Afghan families on their way to Iran in search of work.

In September and August, as hurricanes Gustav and Ike devastated Cuba, Radio Martí implemented emergency coverage and was cited by Cubans as a leading source of hurricane news. TV Martí dedicated a special series of programs to the aftermath of Hurricane Ike.

VOA ramped up its coverage of Pakistani elections in September. Reports covered the violence preceding parliamentary

elections, the dramatic developments of the Pakistan Peoples Party's victory, President Musharraf's resignation and Asif Ali Zardari's presidential victory.

In August, when Russia invaded Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia, RFE/RL and VOA increased broadcasts to the region, dispatched correspondents and offered listeners interviews with high ranking officials. International media frequently cited RFE/RL's in-depth coverage of the Russia-Georgia conflict such as its correspondents' blogs from two Russian-occupied cities with some of the only up-to-the-minute reporting from those locations.

During the buildup to Cambodia's July election, VOA Khmer covered the weeklong detention of an opposition newspaper editor and deepened coverage with live broadcasts and field reports from five Cambodian provinces. RFA ran special programs on the political platforms of all 11 parties and

hosted leaders of each party in a series of 45-minute live call-in programs with voters.

In June, in response to the deepening political crisis in Zimbabwe, VOA doubled its radio broadcasts in English, Shona, and Ndebele by repeating its *Studio 7* evening program. Coverage included on-the-ground reporting from a network of VOA correspondents and reporters in Zimbabwe and nearby countries, and interviews with newsmakers and regional experts.

In June, Taliban forces attacked the main prison of Kandahar, killing 15 guards and freeing 1,200 inmates including 350 Taliban fighters. RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan reporter was one of the first reporting from the scene to provide up to date information and interviews.

When a devastating earthquake killed more than 75,000 people and left millions more homeless in China's Sichuan

**December:** Conflict in Gaza

Radio Sawa extended its newscasts during the crisis in Gaza. (AP Photo)

**November:** Terrorist Attacks in Mumbai

VOA Hindi and Urdu provide comprehensive coverage, including statements condemning the attacks by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

**September:** Hurricane Ike Hits Cuba

Radio and TV Martí implement emergency coverage of Hurricane Ike and are cited by Cubans as a leading source of hurricane news. (AP Photo)

**September:** Pakistan Elections

VOA Urdu ramps up coverage of the parliamentary elections, including the victory of Asif Ali Zardari to be the President of Pakistan. (AP Photo)



# critical



Province last May, VOA's Mandarin and English reporters were on the first plane allowed to fly from Beijing to the scene. PBS's *Lehrer News Hour* included VOA's vivid television reports in its coverage of the catastrophe. VOA broadcast extensive reports and photographs of damage from the earthquake, focusing on rescue efforts, the extent of the damage, the aftershocks, and poignant reactions of the many people directly affected by the tragedy.

RFA Mandarin and Cantonese also provided extensive coverage of the earthquake. Coverage included on-site reporting on recovery efforts and the deaths of school children caused by faulty and illegal school construction.

In April, RFA and VOA added surge broadcasts to Burma, intended to cover the junta's upcoming referendum and in turn providing a platform for in-depth reporting when Cyclone Nargis hit Burma in May.

RFA and VOA Burmese started broadcasting reports of the storm days before it hit Burma and a full 24 hours before the Burmese media made even passing mention of it. RFA and VOA's cyclone warnings were followed by health and safety information essential to Burmese listeners about rescue efforts and available water and power supplies.

Coverage of the destruction and rescue efforts included remarks by President Bush and an appeal by First Lady Laura Bush urging Burma's military leaders to accept U.S. humanitarian aid for cyclone victims.

In March and April, as Iraqi security forces went into a militia stronghold in Basra, two Alhurra Television journalists were embedded with Iraqi security forces to cover the events and give Iraqi viewers a firsthand look. One of those journalists was shot while covering the operation.

**“ I, the civil society of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan thank VOA for excellent coverage of the events since November 3, after the imposition of emergency rule and the suspension of the judiciary. ”**

*Khalilur-Reham Ramday, a Pakistani Supreme Court Justice who had been deposed and detained by Pakistan's President Musharraf, during a live interview with VOA Urdu on the day of his release.*

➤ **August:** Russia Invades South Ossetia  
RFE/RL and VOA dispatch correspondents to the region and provide up-to-the-minute reporting through correspondent blogs from two Russian occupied cities including Gori pictured here. (AFP Photo/Dimitar Dilkov 2008)

➤ **July:** Cambodia's Elections  
RFA and VOA provide comprehensive coverage including special programs on the political platforms of all parties and call-in shows with voters. (AFP Photo/Pornchai Kittiwongsakul 2008)

➤ **May:** Sichuan Earthquake  
Zhang Ming covers the devastation for VOA's Mandarin Service.

➤ **May:** Cyclone Nargis Hits Burma  
RFA and VOA broadcast essential health and safety information to Burmese listeners in the aftermath of the storm.



Information

In March, the BBG responded to the violent crackdown by Chinese authorities in Tibet by expanding RFA and VOA broadcasts. RFA's Tibetan service was one of the first to report about the peaceful protests by monks in Lhasa that were interrupted by Chinese police, provoking riots. RFA Tibetan led international media in reporting the deadly crackdown by Chinese forces on Tibetan protesters demonstrating in the Tibetan capital and elsewhere. As *The Wall Street Journal* said in its April profile of RFA: "the earliest reports of unrest in Tibet last month didn't come from a major newspaper, wire service or TV station. They came from...Washington-based Radio Free Asia..."

VOA also provided compelling coverage of the Tibetan situation and regularly broke news stories and broadcast several exclusive video statements by the Dalai Lama. The Associated Press and other news organizations picked up a VOA

television exclusive on Aku Jigme, an innocent monk who was detained and tortured following the unrest.

In February and March, VOA Turkish and Kurdish provided extensive coverage of the military assault by Turkey against the mountain bases of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the reactions by top U.S. officials and others attempting to prevent further destabilization of the region.

Early in January, VOA's Swahili Service began a new broadcast to Kenya in response to the crisis triggered by that country's December 27 elections. Protests over alleged irregularities in the presidential contest escalated into violence that left more than 500 dead and 250,000 displaced. The Kenyan government banned local radio and TV stations, including VOA affiliate Citizen FM, from broadcasting coverage of the events. A new half-hour morning program on shortwave and FM radio featured live reports from key cities in Kenya, analysis of the

crisis, an in-depth report on corruption in Kenya, a statement from then Senator Barack Obama and reaction from listeners.

These programs highlight the core value of U.S. international broadcasting in providing critical news and information that is reliable, balanced and comprehensive to critical, and sometimes vulnerable, populations.

Coverage of these flashpoints around the world in 2008 reflects only a fraction of the thousands of hours of programming produced each week, but illustrates how well U.S. international broadcasting can serve its audiences, as well as U.S. interests, in times of conflict and uncertainty.

**May:** Cyclone Nargis Hits Burma

VOA and RFA broadcast reports of the storm a full 24 hours before the Burmese media. The services cover Laura Bush's statement encouraging the Burmese government to accept aid. (AFP Photo/Saul Loeb 2008)

**March:** Crackdown in Tibet

VOA and RFA expand their broadcasts. RFA is one of the first to report about the peaceful protests by monks in Lhasa.

**February:** Turkish Military Assault Against PKK

VOA Turkish and Kurdish provide extensive coverage of Turkey's military assault against the mountain bases of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). (AP Photo/Burhan Ozbilici)

**January:** Kenyan Post-election Violence

VOA Swahili begins a new broadcast featuring live reports from key cities in Kenya and analysis of the crisis.



credible



## Threats to Journalists Increase

Reporting from the world's hotspots, four BBG journalists have been murdered in the last two years and intimidation, arrest and detention are persistent realities. Honoring the bravery of U.S. international broadcasting's courageous journalists past and present, the Broadcasting Board of Governors dedicated its memorial to ten journalists slain in the line of duty.

In 2008, Uzbekistan's state television aired a documentary vilifying RFE/RL Uzbek broadcasters and gave out their personal information on air. Iraqi authorities thwarted a plan to assassinate Alhurra Television correspondent Saad Qusay for his reporting on Iranian influence in Basra. RFE/RL Radio Farda reporter Parnaz Azima was convicted by an Iranian court of "anti-establishment" activity and faces imprisonment if she returns to the country.

RFE/RL and VOA correspondents in Afghanistan, where the BBG broadcasters have extensive networks of correspondents, faced kidnapping and received threatening letters and phone calls.

Left to right: (1) Parnaz Azima in RFE/RL radio studio after her release; (2) BBG Governor Joaquin Blaya speaks at the dedication of the BBG memorial to slain journalists.



“The tragic events that we recognize in today’s dedication attest not to the power of despots, but to the power of journalists - whose seemingly insignificant tools produce the words of truth that find their way into millions of households every day.”

*BBG Governor Joaquin F. Blaya*



VOA





**Throughout** 2008 the Voice of America (VOA) continued to expand the use of new media technologies, including the Internet, podcasts, SMS messaging, RSS feeds and social networking to complement its traditional high quality radio and television programming. Broadcasting in 45 languages to an estimated weekly audience of 134 million people, VOA continues its 67-year history of serving the long-range interests of the United States by providing accurate, objective and comprehensive news to the information-deprived in countries such as Iran, North Korea, Zimbabwe and Burma. In 2008, VOA's audiences reached record numbers of non-Arabic-speaking Muslim populations in Indonesia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Somalia and other African countries.

From left to right: (1) VOA Urdu and Radio Deewa correspondent Naseer Kakar covering the earthquake in Baluchistan, Pakistan; (2) Ndimyake Mwakalyeye and Vincent Makori, hosts of *In Focus*, VOA's new magazine show bringing information about Africa and the United States to viewers across Africa; (3) VOA Indonesian's news correspondent Nova Poerwadi in Washington.

VOA continued in 2008 to improve its editorial and production capabilities to stay competitive in dynamic media environments using satellite television, streaming video and other digital media tools. VOA's television programs reached an all-time high of about 69 million people weekly in 2008.

Traffic to VOANews.com increased 47 percent from a year earlier to more than 117 million visits. A quarter of this traffic originated in Iran, and significant segments came from China, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Turkey and Russia. Blogs on Iranian issues, Russian politics, U.S. politics and African music attracted visitors. New, branded pages on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter offered other means for audiences to find VOA content, with more than two million views of VOA videos on YouTube alone. VOA podcasts of audio and video programs on iTunes connected with other audiences. The international research firm Newsknife ranked VOANews.com the fifth most popular source for news on Google in 2008.

Using new and traditional technologies, VOA covered key events throughout the year, including comprehensive treatment of the U.S. presidential and congressional elections, the Russia-Georgia conflict and the March violence in Tibet. Reporting on the deepening political and health crises in Zimbabwe included an innovative text messaging programming to circumvent government censors.

VOA remains a vital lifeline for underserved audiences, such as Iraqi Kurds, for whom it is the only major international broadcaster offering programming in the two main Kurdish dialects, Kurmanji and Sorani.

## 2008 Highlights:

- The Persian News Network (PNN) now reaches 29 percent of Iranian adults, more than one in four, with its six hours of original TV programming each day and expanded use of the PNN Web site. In Afghanistan, more than 30 percent of adults listen to or watch VOA Afghan programs in Dari and Pashto at least once a week.
- VOA Urdu's *Radio Aap ki Dunyaa (Your World)*, with a 12-hour daily broadcast, doubled its audience in Pakistan in 2008. VOA Urdu also started its first affiliation with a private FM radio station in Pakistan by broadcasting four hours a day on the Voice of Kashmir FM and by co-producing coverage of the U.S. election with Pakistan's state radio and television broadcasters.
- In Indonesia, more than 25 million people tune in to VOA each week through local broadcasting partners. VOA Indonesian television products can now be seen on seven of 11 national stations and more than 20



# Qiyamati



local and regional stations. Eight hours of original daily radio programming is produced for more than 230 affiliate FM and AM stations across the country.

- In December 2008, VOA established a new English Division, combining all English-language elements and featuring regionalized programming for radio, TV and Internet. With VOAnews.com as its centerpiece, the new division will greatly expand audio, video and text content for the Internet and other new media delivery systems.

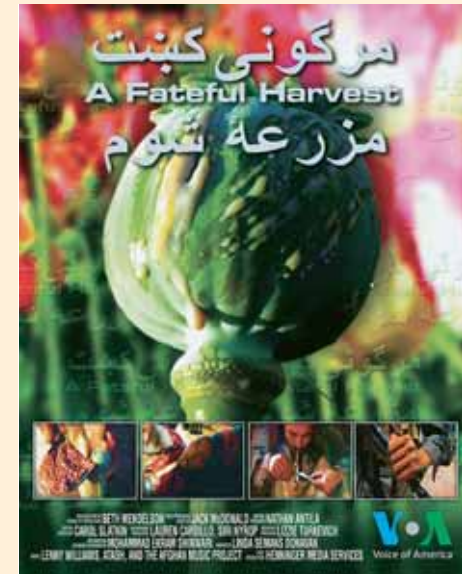
- VOA Turkish launched daily, live webcam reports for nationwide news network TGRT News, and VOA Hindi now produces a five-minute morning news program on Zee News, a leading cable news channel in India.

- VOA's Spanish television news and cultural program *El Mundo al Día (The World Today)* premiered on the popular MGM channel, which reaches 20 million households in 19 countries across Central and South America.

- In China, VOA teamed up with Nokia China to offer English teaching programs directly to cell phones. Multimedia VOA English-language instruction programs sold throughout China are one of the ways VOA gets around government censorship. VOA Mandarin continues to successfully reach audiences via the Internet through proxy servers and mirror sites bypassing government firewalls. About seven million Chinese receive daily e-mail news updates from VOA.

- VOA's Deewa Radio, aimed at more than 40 million Pashto-speaking people living in the volatile Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, taps a network of more than 20 stringers to cover breaking news of vital interest to its audience. Two daily, live call-in shows attract more than 300 calls and messages a day.

- *A Fateful Harvest*, an original documentary produced by VOA's Dari and Pashto language TV Ashna, illuminated the opium trade in Afghanistan and its impact on Afghan society. The 53-minute film, VOA's first endeavor of this kind, was also made available to international audiences on YouTube.



Poster for *A Fateful Harvest*, an original documentary produced by VOA's TV Ashna



From left to right: (1) VOA's election Web site USAvotes2008.com; (2) VOA correspondent Kane Farabaugh reports live from Senator Barack Obama's acceptance speech in Chicago; (3) VOA Pashto's Ahad Azzada interviews former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; (4) Beijing correspondent Ming Zhang and video journalist Sean Liu reporting during the Olympics; (5) In an exclusive interview with VOA Persian's Setareh Derakhshesh, President George W. Bush discussed a wide range of topics; (6) English to Africa reporter Peter Clotley interviewing former Botswana President Quett Masire about receiving the Mo Ibrahim prize; (7) VOA Bangla, which celebrated its 50th anniversary, works on its Web site. From left Ahsanul Huq, Shegofteh Nasreen Queen, M. Anis Ahmed; (8) VOA's Ayaz Gul and Murtaza Solangi interview new Pakistan Prime Minister Gilani in May 2008.

- In July, VOA Korean reported from several Chinese towns and cities bordering North Korea as the Chinese government stepped up efforts to repatriate North Korean refugees in advance of the Olympics. VOA interviewed many defectors, including females who had been smuggled into China as sex slaves. VOA Korean expanded programs and increased medium wave broadcasts from one to five hours.

- VOA provided blanket coverage of Kosovo's declaration of independence. Reporting live from Kosovo's capital, Pristina, VOA Albanian detailed the declaration of independence, the vote in Parliament and street celebrations, with online coverage featured in local media. VOA Serbian gave man-on-the-street reaction and reports on protests in four cities. VOA's Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian and Albanian services also provided comprehensive coverage of former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadic's arrest in Belgrade and trial on charges of genocide in The Hague.

- Heard by more than 66 percent of adults in Mogadishu, VOA Somali interviewed key players in the political crisis and in President Abdullahi Yusuf's resignation, including Somali government officials, opposition leaders and American policymakers.

- In October, the Somali Service sponsored VOA's first live town hall meeting inside Somalia. Some 500 people and a panel of experts attended a three-hour discussion of security, elections and democratization in the northern town of Hargeisa, which was one of the few towns secure enough for such an event.

- VOA Amharic to the Horn of Africa launched a new morning show with in-depth reporting on news and issues targeted for listeners in Ethiopia.

- When violent clashes broke out between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria's northern state of Jos, VOA's coverage included on-the-scene reports and interviews with witnesses, victims, government officials and religious and ethnic leaders. VOA Hausa provided

extensive analysis of the sectarian conflict and organized a panel discussion with members of opposing factions. Some 47 percent of the Hausa-speaking population of Nigeria listens weekly to VOA.

- VOA's Hausa Service reached out to audiences by organizing and broadcasting town hall meetings focusing on health issues and other important topics that attracted 4,000 people in Kaduna and Bauchi in Northern Nigeria.

- In February, VOA's Central Africa Service organized its second annual soccer tournament for former refugees, local youth and former child soldiers in the southern Burundi town of Makamba. More than 8,500 spectators attended the three-day tournament.

## Threats to Journalists

VOA's accurate and balanced news is unwelcome where press freedom is curtailed or non-existent. Hostile groups routinely target journalists, including the following incidents in 2008:



From left to right: (1) VOA Hindi's Vidushi Sinha interviews Congressman Joe Wilson; (2) Panelists at VOA's first live town hall meeting inside Somalia; (3) In an unprecedented joint project, VOA & PTV broadcast live coverage of the US presidential debates and elections; (4) Champions of the 2nd Annual VOA soccer tournament for refugees, youth and former child soldiers in Makamba, Burundi; (5) VOA Afghanistan service TV reporter Wakil Ehsass covers a suicide attack in Kabul, Afghanistan; (6) Ayaz Gul, Urdu correspondent, reporting from Bajau; (7) VOA Hausa's Aliyu Mustapha in the radio studio; (8) Gonzalo Abarca, host of VOA Spanish TV show *El Mundo al Dia*.



- VOA reporter Thomas Chiripasi spent more than two weeks in detention after covering a strike by the opposition party pressuring authorities to release the results of the March presidential election in Zimbabwe.

- Wakil Ehsas, a TV Ashna television reporter, was held at gunpoint on September outside his home in Afghanistan. He managed to escape his attackers but his car and equipment were stolen.

- After reporting on the Taliban massacre of 27 young men - civilians on their way to find work in Iran – VOA's Kandahar reporter received a threat.

- The entire family of a Pashto service reporter was threatened in an effort to pressure him to go off the air.

- Goran Gavrilov, the general manager of a VOA affiliate in Macedonia, was violently beaten, apparently triggered by his work on new broadcasting legislation.

- Armed robbers attacked Hausa staff Ibrahim Ahmed and Abdulwahab Mohammed outside the Abuja airport in Nigeria in October. The assailants shot their

car's tires, dragged the three occupants out of the car and stole all their belongings.

- VOA Persian and Radio Farda reporter Ahmad Rafat was denied admission to the U.N. Food Summit in Rome during President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's trip to Italy, following Rafat's interviews with critics of the Iranian President.

### Awards

Despite the threats to journalists for doing their job, there was international recognition of the important contributions of VOA broadcasters. VOA Burmese reporter Aye Aye Mar won the U.N. Development Program's 2008 Red Ribbon award, which is presented every two years to individuals who demonstrate leadership and action in curtailing the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS.

**“VOA’s broadcasts kept me going during those five years.”**

*Myunghee Eum, a North Korean defector at a press conference on Capitol Hill in May following her release from a Chinese prison where she was held for rescuing hundreds of refugees. She was happy to be interviewed by VOA because she said, “I still have friends in that prison. When they hear my name in this report it will give them hope.”*



lifetime



# REF/RL





## RadioFreeEurope RadioLiberty

**As** a private non-profit organization and grantee of the BBG, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) broadcasts uncensored news and information in 28 languages to countries where a free press is either banned by the government or not fully established. Each week, more than 25 million listeners in 20 countries – including Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Russia – rely on RFE/RL for a balanced and reliable account of events in their region and the world. RFE/RL stretches across 11 time zones in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus, the Middle East, and Southwestern Asia and maintains 19 foreign bureaus.

RFE/RL produces more than 1,000 hours of programming each week from its headquarters in Prague, Czech Republic. Its corporate offices are located in Washington, D.C. In December 2008, RFE/RL began moving into a new, state-of-the-art broadcast center in Prague.

From left to right: (1) Hundreds rallied under heavy security presence on Moscow's Pushkin Square in October 2008 to remember slain journalist Anna Politkovskaya; (2) Radio Free Afghanistan on location in Helmand Province; (3) RFE/RL Armenian Service correspondent Ruzanna Stepanyan reporting on the March post-election clashes between police and protestors in Yerevan.

## 2008 Highlights

- When Radio Farda, RFE/RL's Persian Service, launched a new roundtable program in April inviting listeners to freely express their views on social and political issues, the first group of callers criticized the Iranian government for mismanaging the economy. In December, one of four student protestors arrested and subsequently released by authorities credited Radio Farda's extensive coverage of their plight for helping secure their release.
- When an Iran-bound passenger plane crashed outside Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in August, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service was the first media outlet to report the accident.
- RFE/RL's Russian and North Caucasus services covered the ongoing Moscow trial of the suspected murderers of journalist Anna Politkovskaya with blogging from the courtroom and interviews with lawyers, legal experts and members of her family.

- RFE/RL's news reports often draw the ire of repressive governments who seek to deny their citizens access to free and independent media:
  - In December, the Azeri government took RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service off the FM airwaves, along with VOA, BBC and other foreign broadcasters.
  - In October, state-owned radio and television networks removed RFE/RL's popular Kyrgyz Service programs from the airwaves.
  - In April, RFE/RL's Belarus Service suffered a cyber attack as it was preparing live coverage of a rally commemorating the 22nd anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident.
  - In June, the Kazakh government-owned Internet service provider shut down RFE/RL's Kazakh Service Web site for seven weeks
  - In March, Armenian authorities blocked access to the RFE/RL Web site and affiliate radio stations took its programs off the air. RFE/RL restored shortwave

broadcasts to Armenia and added more news to its Web site. The number of visitors tripled.

## Threats to Journalists

Journalists who work for RFE/RL often put their lives – and those of their families – at risk:

- In November, RFE/RL Radio Free Afghanistan correspondent Dawa Khan Meenapal and a colleague were abducted by the Taliban and spent four days in captivity in remote mountain villages.
- In March, an Iranian court sentenced Radio Farda correspondent Parnaz Azima, who lives in exile in Prague, to one year in prison for “spreading anti-state propaganda.”
- In June, state-owned television accused RFE/RL journalists of “anti-state activities” and broadcast personal information about them.
- In June, a contributor to RFE/RL's Turkmen Service was detained by authorities and severely beaten for



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refusing to sign a letter agreeing to stop working for RFE/RL.

• In August, a mob incited by local police attacked two Azeri RFE/RL journalists as they were reporting from a local market in Azerbaijan's lawless Nakhichevan province.

## Awards

For their commitment to bringing uncensored news and information to millions of people, many RFE/RL journalists were recognized for their work in 2008:

- Radio Free Afghanistan journalist Brishna Nazari was recognized by the Afghanistan National Union of Journalists for aiding Afghan society through balanced and objective reporting.
- Radio Free Afghanistan won an award from the Afghan Paralympic Committee for its coverage of the nation's paralympic athletes.
- Armenian Service won a UNICEF-sponsored award for its daily youth radio program, *Max Liberty*.

• Uzbek Service journalist Umida Niyazova was one of five recipients of Human Rights Watch's prestigious 2008 Human Rights Defender Award.

• The Chief Editor of the Kazakh Service Web site, Amangeldy Myrzabek, won a journalism award recognizing "those who contribute to real democratic development and civil society in Kazakhstan."

• Georgian Service journalist Jumsher Rekhviashvili won a UNDP-sponsored award for excellence in reporting on gender issues.

• Azerbaijani Service journalist Babek Bekir won a national award for a series of groundbreaking reports on the Azeri drug trade.

• The Azerbaijani Service was named "Most Successful Media Organization of the Year" by a Baku-based organization of women journalists.

• The Moldova Service won the grand prize in a UNDP-sponsored award for the promotion of human rights.

• Romanian President Traian Basescu presented an award to RFE/RL in recognition of its decades of broadcasts to Romania, which ended in August.

“**Twenty eight years after the revolution in Iran, there's finally an outlet that brings the voices of young Iranians to those who need to hear them.**”

*Ahmed from Tehran via SMS text message to Radio Farda.*



From left to right: (1) RFE/RL added more news to their Armenian Web site and web traffic tripled; (2) RFE/RL correspondent Malahat Nasibova, interviewing village elders in Nehrem, Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic in August. Minutes later Nasibova and her husband were attacked by a mob incited by local police; (3) First-hand reporting via RFE/RL blogs from Gori broke news of events in Georgia; (4) RFE/RL Russian Service roundtable program; (5) RFE/RL's recently completed Prague headquarters; (6) RFE/RL Kabul Bureau staff distributed donations of blankets and clothes from Afghan-American Mr. Omer Timory to internally displaced people suffering from unprecedented cold weather in February 2008; (7) Billboard advertising Radio Free Afghanistan frequencies in downtown Kabul; (8) Parnaz Azima, correspondent for RFE/RL, following her release from "virtual prison" in Iran on charges of spreading anti-state propaganda.

reol



O C B





# RADIO MARTÍ TV

## The Office of Cuba Broadcasting

(OCB) oversees the operations of Radio and TV Martí from its headquarters in Miami, Florida. In contrast to the state-controlled, censored and manipulated news in Cuba, Radio and TV Martí serve as consistently reliable and authoritative sources of accurate, objective, and comprehensive news.

Cubans across the island report that Radio Martí is increasingly serving as a “local news station” informing them about what is happening in other parts of the country. Establishing an extensive network of independent journalists throughout the island has driven OCB’s ability to provide extensive local coverage such as during the devastating hurricanes of 2008.

From left to right: (1) Residents in the rain from Hurricane Ike in Herradura, Cuba (AP Photo/Fernando Llano); (2) Cuban authorities arrest Ladies in White. (EFE News Services Photo)

Radio Martí broadcasts news and a variety of features and news analysis programs seven days a week, 24 hours a day by shortwave and medium wave.

TV Martí broadcasts 24 hours per day, seven days a week on the Hispasat satellite; four and a half hours per day, six days a week from a modified aircraft, AeroMartí, including two 30-minute live newscasts each day; and three and a half hours per day, five days a week (two hours per day on weekends) on DirecTV satellite.

Radio and TV Martí are streamed live through the redesigned OCB Web site, [martinoticias.com](http://martinoticias.com), launched in December of 2008.

The closed nature of Cuban society makes it extraordinarily difficult to gather and broadcast news. BBG broadcasts must overcome Cuban government jamming as well as press censorship and intimidation. Audience surveys must be done through telephone surveys rather than face-to-face interviews. Given that

less than a fifth of Cuban adults have published phone numbers and that interviewees may be wary of admitting in a telephone call to listening to or watching the Martí, the utility of these surveys is limited. Interviews with Cubans who have recently arrived in the U.S. provide anecdotal information of higher audience rates than reflected in the telephone surveys.

Delivery of TV Martí continued to be enhanced in 2008 to include multiple hours of live news broadcast daily from AeroMartí on VHF, UHF, and via satellite television on DirecTV and Hispasat. Fifteen to 20 hours of original TV programs are now produced weekly and entirely in house including graphics. Utilizing new set designs and digital equipment, TV Martí's programming is more contemporary, fast-paced and appealing.

## 2008 Highlights

- In February, Radio and TV Martí provided comprehensive coverage of Fidel Castro's announcement that, after 49 years in power, he would not seek or serve another term as President of the State Council and Commander in Chief, as well as the Cuban National Assembly officially designating 76-year old Raul Castro as Fidel Castro's successor.
- In April, Havana blogger Yoani Sanchez won the prestigious Jose Ortega y Gasset Award, given each year by the Spanish newspaper *El Pais*. The award is considered to be the foremost prize in journalism for the Spanish language. Radio Martí broke the story and interviewed Yoani Sanchez who, despite Cuban government interference, writes the best-known blog coming out of Cuba.



# reliable



- Also in April, Radio Martí News broke the story of a peaceful protest in Havana by the group Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White). Via cell phone, live from Revolutionary Square in Havana, two protesters joined the early morning Radio Martí newscast and explained that the protest was calling on the government to release political prisoners and that they were delivering a letter to head of state Raul Castro calling for respect for human rights in the island.

- Hurricanes Gustav and Ike bombarded Cuba in September and October. Radio Martí implemented its emergency coverage, and was cited by Cubans as a leading source of news on the hurricanes. During the first day after Hurricane Gustav left the Isle of Youth and parts of the province of Pinar del Rio without communications, Radio Martí was the first media to have extensive reports on the damage in the region. TV Martí provided a special program series including coverage of relief efforts based in Miami.

- Given the tremendous audience interest in and enthusiasm for baseball, Radio and TV Martí provided live broadcasts of the World Series as well as interviews with Major League Players like Orlando “El Duque” Hernandez.

- OCB began broadcasting TV Martí on VHF (Channel 13) via an AeroMartí aircraft in mid-December 2008. The airborne platform can now simulcast on VHF and UHF (Channel 20).

**“ Thanks to the staff of Radio Martí. The station has been THE source of information on Hurricane Ike since Cuban media is not reporting about the damages. ”**

*Jose Triero, independent journalist from Holguin, one of the most affected cities in Cuba.*



From left to right: (1) Members of Cuba's governing state council attend the National Assembly in Havana, including Cuba's President Raul Castro at left. (AP Photo/Javier Galeano); (2) AeroMartí, the airborne transmission platform, can now broadcast on UHF and VHF simultaneously; (3) Radio Martí Newsroom in Miami; (4) Cuban blogger Yoani Sanchez, author of the popular Generation Y blog, is a regular contributor on Radio Martí; (5) Miami Mayor Manny Diaz on the set at TV Martí; (6) Ladies in White protest and call for the government to release political prisoners. (EFE News Services Photo)



IRFA





**Radio Free Asia**

**Radio Free Asia** (RFA), a private, non-profit news organization and grantee of the BBG, broadcasts daily in nine languages to listeners in Asia whose governments restrict media. RFA broadcasts accurate and timely news and information, along with a range of voices and opinions from within Asia, to demonstrate freedom of expression over the airwaves and online.

RFA focuses on news and features of unique and specific relevance to its target areas. Through shortwave, medium wave, satellite transmissions and the Internet, RFA broadcasts in Mandarin, Cantonese, Uyghur, Burmese, Vietnamese, Korean, Lao, Khmer, and three dialects of Tibetan. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., RFA has seven overseas bureaus and an extensive network of stringers around the world. Call-in programs and multimedia Web sites allow listeners and readers to express views and exchange ideas.

From left to right: (1) Man listens to radio after the Sichuan earthquake as 150,000 Chinese residents evacuate for fear of flooding from a swollen “quake lake” (AFP Photo 2008); (2) Locals displaced by Cyclone Nargis line up outside their tents as U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon tours the camp in Kyondah village, Myanmar (AP Photo/Stan Honda, Pool); (3) Tibetan Buddhist monks shout slogans and carry the Tibetan national flag before being blocked by riot police at a protest near the historic Labrang Monastery in March 2008. (AFP Photo/Mark Ralston 2008)

Major media cite and reproduce RFA news stories daily. Following strict journalistic standards of objectivity, integrity and balance, RFA serves as a model for its target countries' emerging journalistic practices. Reaching Asian listeners from all social strata and maintaining credibility are RFA's top priorities. RFA's breaking news coverage during the unprecedented crises in East and Southeast Asia in 2008 was singled out as authoritative by *The Wall Street Journal*, AFP, NHK, and others.

## 2008 Highlights

- In addition to its reporting of the devastating April Sichuan earthquake, RFA's Mandarin and Cantonese services provided extensive coverage of the Chinese government's crackdown on media and dissent in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics. Dissidents were harassed, detained, beaten, and tried, as authorities pledged greater openness for the 2008 games. RFA tracked the post-Olympic tightening of media restric-

tions and the crackdown on civil liberty groups, such as Charter 08.

- RFA's Tibetan Service, broadcasting in Uke, Amke, and Khamke, led the world in its coverage of the March unrest in Lhasa.
- Along with its exhaustive coverage of Cyclone Nargis, RFA's Burmese Service reported on the draconian sentences given to activists involved in the Saffron Revolution.
- RFA's Khmer service increased its broadcasts from two to three hours to cover the Cambodian national elections. The service arranged two live debates in addition to special programs on the political platforms of all 11 parties. RFA reported on reaction to the election results, including condemnation from international election monitors regarding severe voting irregularities.
- RFA's Uyghur Service—which targets millions of Muslims in China's northwest region—broadcast a series of stories on an ethnic Uyghur woman who was sched-

uled to undergo a second-term abortion against her will. Due to the heightened scrutiny, the woman was released to her family and allowed to continue her pregnancy.

- RFA's Vietnamese Service broadcast a series of reports on government attempts to seize property belonging to the Roman Catholic Church in Hanoi, including accounts of the arrest and beatings of parishioners and video documentation from citizen journalists.
- RFA's Lao Service reported extensively on the plight of over eight-thousand Hmong refugees held in Thai detention camps, getting exclusive information via cell phone and confirmed by Doctors Without Borders.
- RFA's Korean Service broke a series of stories on North Korean agencies responsible for overseeing foreign investments. This year saw a marked increase in republication of RFA news in major South Korean newspapers, television and Internet news.



# authorita



With a channel on YouTube offering language services' video production and redistributing citizen journalist content, RFA has taken full advantage of new media as a major conduit for outreach and multinational discourse. During 2008, as social media gained considerable importance in the global information flow, RFA opened Twitter accounts, or their equivalent, in all its languages; Facebook pages; and topical blogs, such as the blog written by an RFA broadcaster during the meetings in Dharamsala on the future of Tibet, an informal view of events during the Olympic Games and the countdown to the U.S. presidential elections.

## 2008 Awards

A number of RFA language services were honored with awards in 2008 including:

- The Mandarin Service won the American Women in Radio and Television Gracie Allen Award for Most Outstanding Series for its piece on "The Internet and Civil Rights in China."

- Amnesty International, the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents' Club, and the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) honored the Cantonese service for reporting on forced abortions that led to riots and an official investigation in southwest China.
- The Burmese Service won a gold medal in the New York Festivals Radio Programming Competition for its coverage of the September 2007 Saffron Revolution.
- The Vietnamese Service was honored with a New York Festivals bronze medal for a story on a Vietnamese girl involved in the sex trade in Cambodia.
- The Hong Kong Consumer Council and the HKJA awarded a silver medal to the Cantonese Service for consumer rights reporting.

“**The government took our land and has held my husband in detention for more than six months [for protesting]. The court sided with the government... I have nothing left and don't know what to do. Only you are our voice.**”

*RFA Cantonese listener in Xinxing County, Guangdong Province*

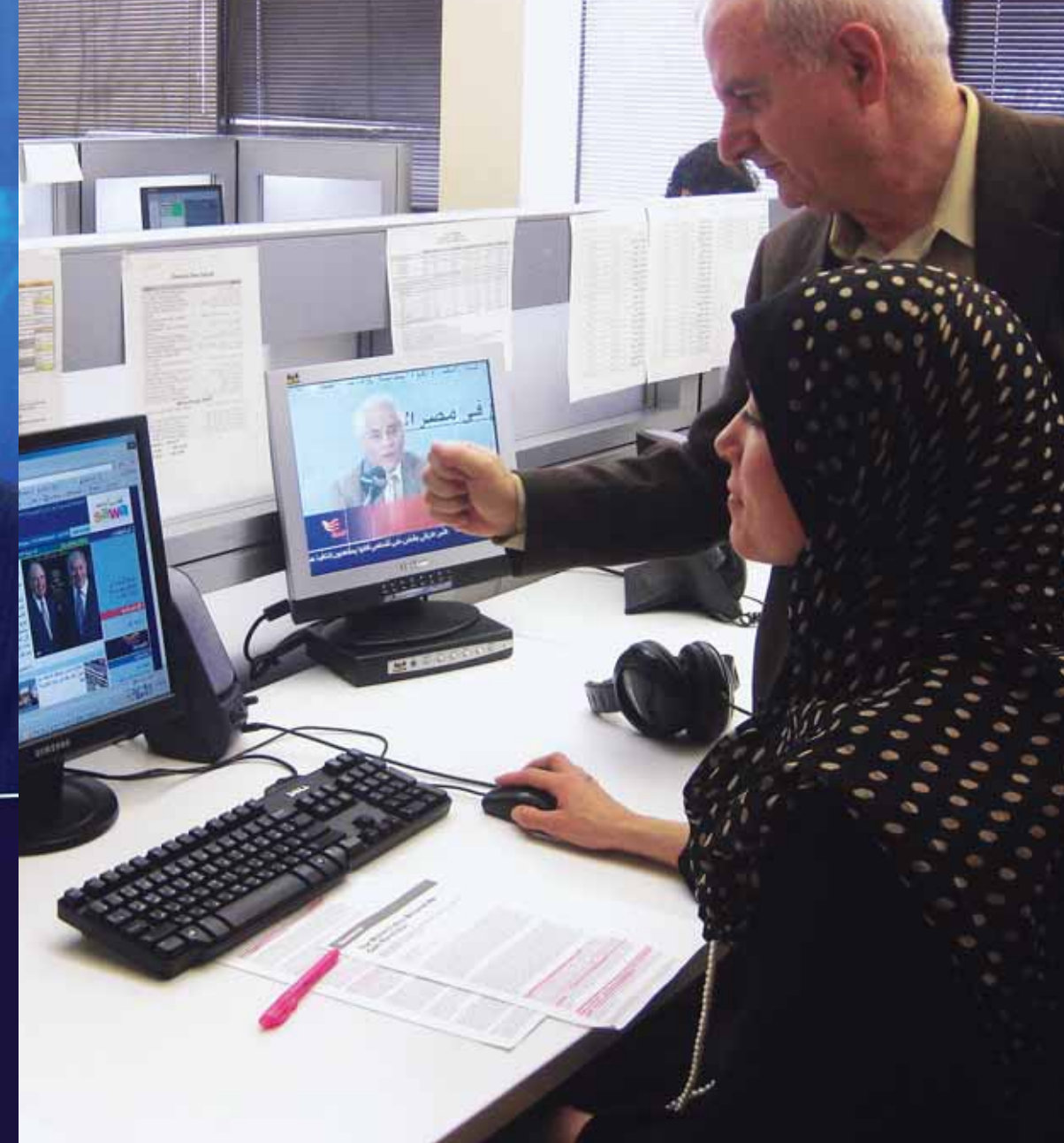


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From left to right: (1) A Burmese family takes refuge in temporary housing after Cyclone Nargis (AP Photo); (2) RFA's Tibetan Web site using specialized font developed by RFA; (3) Duke University student Grace Wang, who tried to mediate between Chinese and Tibetan students clashing on campus, sparked a nationalist backlash in China that sent her parents into hiding; (4) Tibetan monks in India listen to shortwave radio during march to Tibet border; (5) RFA's YouTube site; (6) World Uyghur Congress President Rebiya Kadeer interviewed at RFA; (7) Dolkar reports for RFA Tibetan from Tiananmen Square during the 2008 Olympics; (8) Radio Free Asia hosts election debate in Phnom Penh during Cambodia's 2008 national election.







# MBN

MIDDLE EAST BROADCASTING NETWORKS, INC.



## The Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Inc.

(MBN), a private non-profit news organization and grantee of the BBG, operates Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa with a combined audience reach of 35 million people each week. In a region riddled by violence and bombarded by anti-American rhetoric, MBN's Arabic-language broadcasts provide a balanced platform to discuss U.S. policies and institutions and to engage the audience in conversation about America, and issues of democracy and human rights.

Alhurra Television broadcasts objective and accurate news and information to 22 countries throughout the Middle East on the Nilesat and Arabsat satellite systems and on the Internet live at

From left to right: (1) Iraqis watch Alhurra Television in Sadr City in Baghdad (AP Photo/Karim Kadim); (2) Toufic Gebran, host of Alhurra Television's *i-TECH* show on new technology; (3) Badiia Mansouri and Munir Nasser work on Radio Sawa's all news Web site, [www.RadioSawa.com](http://www.RadioSawa.com)

www.alhurra.com. Alhurra Television has separate channels for Iraq and Europe with focused programming for those key audiences.

Since its launch in 2004, Alhurra Television has garnered increasing audiences and credibility. Its weekly audience, according to independent research by ACNielsen and other respected firms, tops 26 million. More than half of adult Iraqis watch Alhurra Television weekly, more than watch Al Jazeera. In Syria, Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa together reach 61 percent of adults weekly.

Reporting on world, regional and U.S. events, Alhurra Television provides context and analysis from American think tanks and U.S. officials as well as experts from the region to give viewers a broader understanding of issues and actions that affect the Middle East.

Radio Sawa reaches a significant portion of the influential under-30 population of the Middle East and has an audience of 17 million. Broadcasting 24/7,

mostly on FM, Radio Sawa provides reliable and objective up-to-date news, interesting information and an upbeat blend of mainstream Western and Arabic popular music. Launched in 2002, Radio Sawa now broadcasts more than seven hours of news and information each day and provides current news and information as well as its separate program streams live via the Internet.

Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa have built reputations as respected sources of news and information in the region and, in the last few months of 2008, were quoted by NPR, *Chicago Tribune*, the *New York Times*, AFP, pan-Arab newspapers *Asharq Alawsat* and *Al Quds Al Arabi*, *Iraq News Agency*, *Jerusalem Post* and *News Yemen*, to name a few.

## 2008 Highlights

- Alhurra Television hosted numerous interviews with U.S. policymakers including President George W. Bush;

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; Secretary of Defense Robert Gates; and members of Congress.

- Alhurra-Iraq continues to report on the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people including water quality, healthcare and security problems. In March, Alhurra-Iraq reported on the deteriorating conditions of the Iraqi schools; as a result the Minister of Education was called before the Parliament to address the issues.

- Radio Sawa expanded its coverage by adding FM transmitters in Fallujah, Ramadi and Tikrit; increasing the total number of FM transmitters in Iraq to 14.

- In September, an all-news and information program, *Afia Darfur* began broadcasting to Darfur, Sudan. The daily 30-minute shortwave radio program focuses on the latest news from Sudan and the plight of displaced people in Darfur and eastern Chad and includes interviews with American officials, NGO representatives, representatives of displaced populations, and Sudanese experts.



# Objective



- In the midst of the global economic crisis *From Wall Street*, the first live weekly program in Arabic from the New York Stock Exchange debuted on Alhurra Television to present the latest financial news and the impact of market developments.

- Alhurra Television's program on women's rights, *Equality*, profiled influential American women during a special U.S. based series including former Secretary Donna Shalala, Chairman of the American Red Cross Bonnie McElveen Hunter and former Chairman and CEO of Hewlett-Packard Carly Fiorina.

- Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa are reaching new audiences through emergent digital technologies and interactive platforms. Young people in the region rely heavily on the Internet as an essential source of information. In November, Alhurra Television became a YouTube partner channel with its own page for viewing Alhurra Television programs that is responsive to YouTube's search engine.

## Threats to Journalists

Unfortunately, news-gathering in a region in conflict places MBN correspondents at risk:

- In October, police thwarted a plan to assassinate Alhurra Television correspondent Saad Qusay for his reporting on the Iranian influence in Basra. Qusay received round-the-clock protection from the police at his home following discovery of the plot.

- Mazen Al-Tayar, an Alhurra Television correspondent in Basra, Iraq, was shot in the leg by sniper fire while covering the security situation there in April.

- Alhurra Television's correspondent in Baghdad, Iman Bilal, was embroiled in a lawsuit resulting from her reporting about contaminated water in Iraq. She was later acquitted by an Iraqi court.

“ With the heated elections race in the United States, Alhurra distinguished itself as the most professional & active satellite TV channel among all the Arabic-speaking satellite channels in covering the U.S. presidential primaries. ”

*Al Hayat Arabic newspaper, April 2008*



From left to right: (1) Iraqi girls in front of a crumbling school (AP Photo/Alaa Al-Marjani); (2) The set of *Hunna*, Alhurra Television's weekly program dedicated to the rights of women; (3) MBN State Department correspondent Michel Ghandour with then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; (4) Interview with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari at Alhurra Television's studios in Springfield, VA; (5) Alhurra Television reports daily from NASDAQ and NYSE; (6) *Afia Darfur* broadcasts to refugees from war-torn Darfur (AFP Photo/Issouf Sanogo 2008); (7) *Afia Darfur* staff Zagrat Abuzaid and Elzubeir Eltayeb broadcast an all-news and information program to Sudan.







## International Broadcasting Bureau

**The International Broadcasting Bureau** (IBB) provides transmission services, marketing, and program placement for all the BBG broadcast organizations. IBB manages a global network of transmitting sites and an extensive system of leased satellite and fiber optic circuits, along with a rapidly growing Internet delivery system. It also provides human resource, EEO, procurement, security, information technology, public affairs, administrative, research, and program evaluation services to the Voice of America and Radio/TV Martí. The IBB Office of Policy produces U.S. government editorials broadcast daily on VOA.

From left to right: (1) Tower work on HF antenna in Saipan to replace fasteners; (2) Bradley University Professor Gregory Pitts at an IBB sponsored workshop on broadcast journalism for local affiliate radio station managers in Indonesia in November; (3) Acting IBB Deputy Director and VOA Director Danforth Austin addressed an audience of 160 journalism students at Renmin University in Beijing in October 2008.

## 2008 Highlights

IBB appointed a Director of New Media to better employ modern interactive communication techniques and technologies in engaging the world in conversation about the United States. VOA's Internet presence and the use of digital platforms for distribution of multimedia content included:

- Creation of an interactive Web site focusing on the U.S. elections.
- A 47 percent increase in visits to VOANews.com compared with a year earlier; and
- Establishment of new social media outreach, such as a VOA YouTube channel, a podcast library on iTunes, and blogs.

To expand transmission capacities and audience reach in priority countries:

- A groundbreaking agreement was signed to transmit VOA's Korean programs from South Korea into North Korea.

- VOA's new Spanish-language daily newscast, *El Mundo al Dia*, was placed on the MGM Channel, reaching more than 16 million households across Central and South America.
- IBB secured six major market affiliates for the new VOA TV-to-Africa program *In Focus*.

To enhance program delivery across all relevant platforms and optimize broadcasting operations:

- IBB's global distribution network supported new requirements, including surge transmissions to eight countries in conflict and broadcasting *Afia Darfur* radio news program to Darfur.
- IBB continued to shift transmission resources to serve audiences with the most effective and economical media, resulting in the closure of the Morocco Transmitting Station in March.

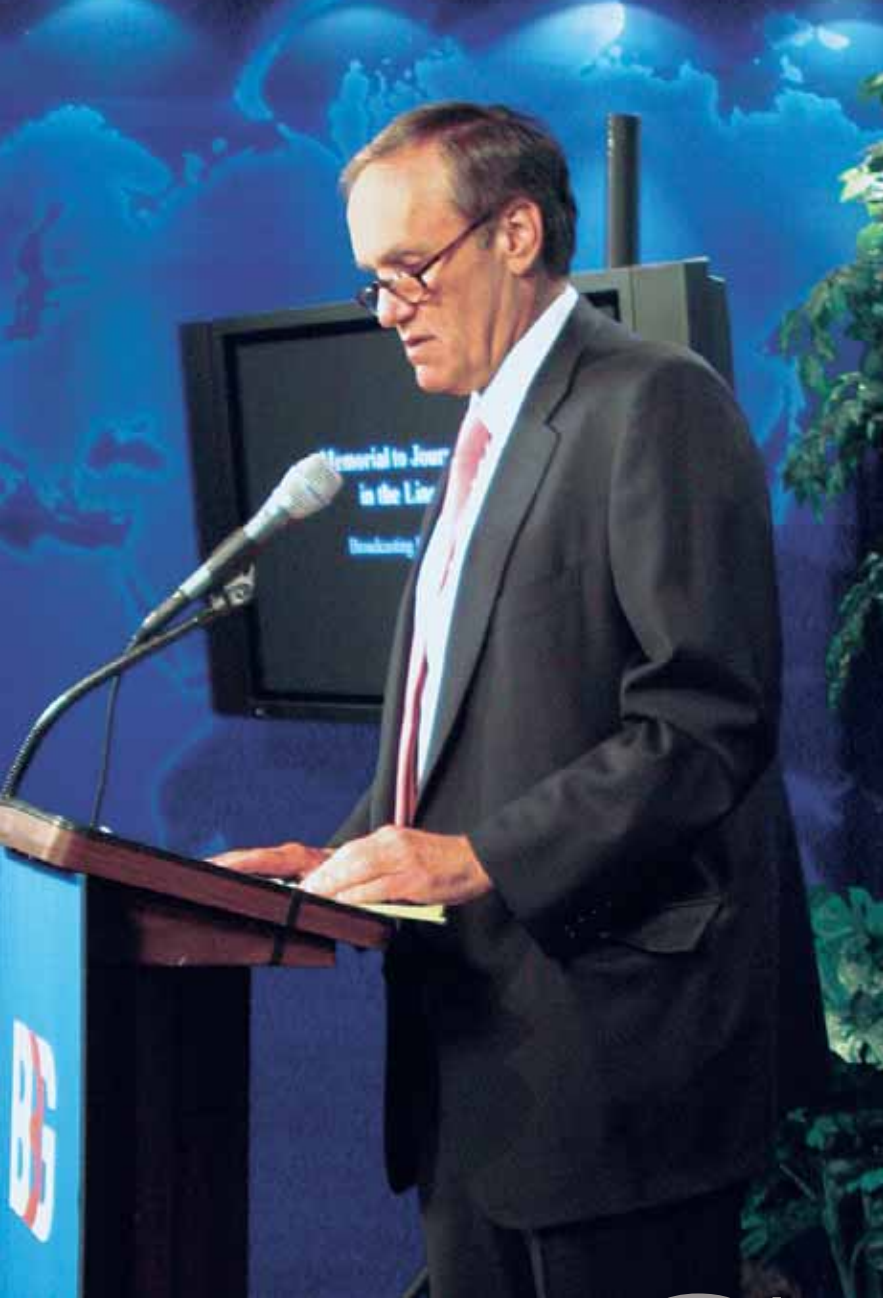
To better align essential support functions with broadcasting implementation strategies and performance goals:

- Market research questionnaires were updated to provide greater focus on digital media.
- Workforce restructuring continued through training, buyouts and other efforts.
- IBB sustained excellent resolution rates of informal EEO complaints and timely completion of formal investigations.
- The Agency implemented a new integrated financial and procurement management system.
- Budget, financial management, procurement, and human resources training were provided to managers and Administrative Officers.
- Ongoing language service program reviews resulted in close to 1,000 recommended actions to improve programming.
- To better fulfill its mission of presenting the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, the Office of Policy launched a new series of TV editorials called *Policy Brief*.



# SUPPORT





# BBG

From left to right: (1) The marketing booth for VOA at the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union annual meeting in Bali, Indonesia, November 2008; (2) Burmese journalists at a workshop on ways to cover the Avian influenza in Chiang Mai, Thailand; (3) Satellite dish maintenance, inspection and repair; (4). Far East Broadcasting Company President Dr. Billy Kim shakes hands with IBB Director of Marketing and External Liaison Gary Thatcher after signing an agreement to broadcast VOA Korean programming deep into North Korea via FEBC's 100KW AM transmitter; (5) BBG Governor Steven Simmons speaks at the dedication of the BBG memorial to its slain journalists; (6) BBG Governor Edward Kaufman interviewed by VOA Macedonian at the Democratic National Convention.

The BBG is a bipartisan board comprised of nine members: eight are appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate, and the ninth is the Secretary of State, who serves *ex officio*.



**Joaquin F. Blaya** is chairman of Blaya Media Inc. Since emigrating to the U.S. from Chile, where he worked in marketing and media, he has held a number of senior management positions with media companies. He served as chairman of Radio Unica, a Spanish-language radio network, and as CEO of the Telemundo Group, Inc., the nation's second-largest Spanish-language television network. He also served as president of Univision Holdings, Inc., the nation's largest Spanish-language media company. He is on the Boards of Trustees of the University of Miami and the Sylvester Cancer Center.



**Blanquita Walsh Cullum** is founder and president of the Young American Broadcasters. Cullum is chairwoman of the Talk Radio First Amendment Committee and served as president of the National Association of Radio Talk Show Hosts.

Her 25-year career includes serving as host and anchor for nationally syndicated talk and television shows and as a producer, reporter and political analyst. For over a decade, *Talkers Magazine* listed Cullum as one of the 100 most important Talk Show hosts in the United States.



**James K. Glassman**, as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, represented Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on the BBG from June 2008 until January 2009. He

served as BBG Chairman from June 2007 until June 2008. Previously, Glassman was a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Glassman is the former president of The Atlantic Monthly Co., publisher of *The New Republic*, Executive Vice President of *U.S. News & World Report*, editor-in-chief and co-owner of *Roll Call*, host of *Capital Gang Sunday* and *Washington Post* columnist. Glassman served on the Congressionally-mandated Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World.



**D. Jeffrey Hirschberg** is a partner in Kalorama Partners, a consulting firm. He retired from Ernst & Young in 1999 as vice chairman/governmental affairs. Previously, Hirschberg worked for the U.S. Justice Department as deputy chief of the criminal division's special litigation section, where he was responsible for investigations and prosecutions under



From left to right: (1) Hargeisa FM Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony in Addis Ababa with Minister of Information and National Guidance for Somaliland Ahmed Haji Dahir Elmi (L) and BBG Governor Edward Kaufman (R); (2) BBG Chairman James Glassman speaking at the Heritage Foundation about the mission of U.S. international broadcasting; (3) BBG Governors Joaquin Blaya, Blanquita Cullum and Edward Kaufman meet with employees in the VOA Newscenter; (4) BBG Governor Joaquin F. Blaya, Middle East Broadcasting Networks President Brian Conniff, MBN Communications Director Deirdre Kline, and Alhurra Television business correspondent Mohamed Nassar outside NASDAQ in Times Square; (5) BBG Governors Joaquin Blaya, Steven Simmons and Blanquita Cullum with a delegation of VOA reporters from Haiti in Washington for journalism training; (6) Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (and former BBG Chairman) James Glassman appears on VOA Persian's daily call-in show *Roundtable with You*; (7) BBG Governor Steven Simmons, State Department representative Bud Jacobs and BBG Governor Edward Kaufman at work; (8) BBG Governor Jeffrey Hirschberg speaks on the 60th anniversary of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights at a BBG event about international news coverage in a new media world.



the pre-Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. He also prosecuted civil and criminal matters as an assistant U.S. Attorney in Milwaukee. Hirschberg is a director of the U.S.-Russia Business Council, and a former director of the Center for Democracy.



**Edward E. Kaufman** was appointed a charter member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors in 1995 and served until appointed as the U.S. Senator for Delaware in December 2008. Kaufman is a senior lecturing fellow at Duke University's School of Law, Fuqua School, and Sanford Institute. He was a trustee of Christiana Care Corporation and on the board of directors of Children and Families First. Kaufman was formerly Chief of Staff to U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (D-DE). Previously, he worked in various technical, financial, and marketing positions with the DuPont Company.



**Steven J. Simmons** is Chairman and CEO of Simmons Patriot Media and Communications, LLC, which manages cable TV/Internet/digital phone companies. In 2006, *Cable World* named him Independent Cable Operator of the Year. Simmons served on the board of the National Cable Television Association, was elected a Cable TV Pioneer, and co-founded and chairs the Cable Entrepreneurs Club. Simmons previously served as an Associate Director on the White House's Domestic Policy Staff and was an Associate Professor at The University of California. His writing includes *The Fairness Doctrine and the Media*, a number of articles on communications law, and the best-selling children's book, *Alice and Greta*.



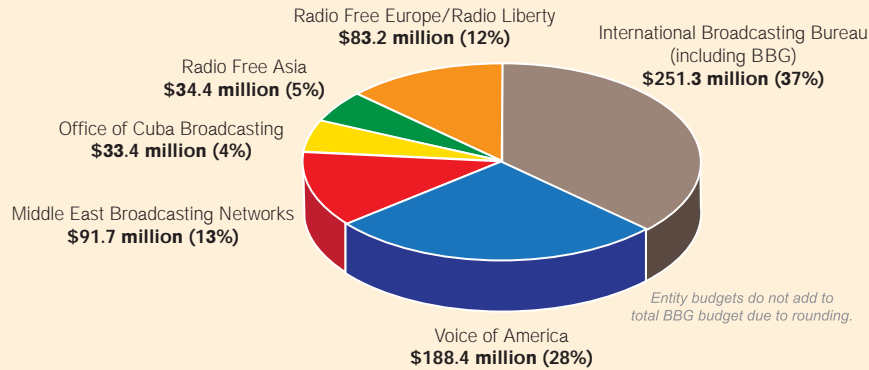
**Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice** served as the ex-officio member of the Board during her tenure at the Department of State. Rice previously served as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, commonly called the National Security Advisor. She also served in President George H.W. Bush's administration as Director, and then Senior Director, of Soviet and East European Affairs in the National Security Council, and as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

*Note: The list of BBG Board members reflects all who served during 2008. There were vacancies during the calendar year.*



# Service

**Allocation of the BBG FY 2008 Budget**  
**Total: \$682.2 million**



**FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**  
(Dollars in Thousands)

	2008	2007
<b>At End of Year:</b>		
Condensed Balance Sheet Data:		
Fund Balance with U.S.	\$151,853	\$199,002
Accounts Receivable	4,205	3,088
Property, Plant, and Equipment	138,033	213,470
Other	2,589	1,591
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$296,680</b>	<b>\$417,151</b>
Accounts Payable	956	9,476
Retirement and Payroll	33,353	29,940
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$34,309</b>	<b>\$39,416</b>
Unexpended Appropriations	118,228	157,510
Cumulative Results of Operations	144,143	220,225
<b>Total Net Position</b>	<b>\$262,371</b>	<b>\$377,735</b>
<b>Total Liabilities And Net Position</b>	<b>\$296,680</b>	<b>\$417,151</b>
<b>For the Year:</b>		
Total Cost	810,035	688,370
Total Earned Revenue	(3,535)	(2,883)
<b>Total Net Cost Of Operations</b>	<b>\$806,500</b>	<b>\$685,487</b>

**Financial Highlights FY 2008**

The BBG summary financial statement for Fiscal Year 2008 is presented here. The independent accounting firm, Leonard G. Birnbaum and Company, LLP conducted the BBG's FY 2008 financial statement audit and issued an unqualified ("clean") opinion on the BBG's Principal Financial Statements. This is the best possible audit result.

Preparing these statements allows the BBG to improve financial management and provide accurate and reliable information to Congress, the President and U.S. taxpayers. BBG management is responsible for the integrity and objectivity of the financial information presented in the statements.

The financial data presented in this report have been prepared from the accounting records of the BBG in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). In addition, standards as prescribed by the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board (FASAB) have been applied.





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330 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20237  
Tel.: 202-203-4959  
Fax: 202-203-4960  
[www.VOANews.com](http://www.VOANews.com)

## Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty

1201 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Telephone: 202-457-6900  
Fax: 202-457-6992

Broadcast Headquarters:  
Vinohradská 159A  
CZ-100 00 Prague 10  
Czech Republic  
Telephone: 420-221-121-111  
Fax: 420-221-123-013  
[www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org)

## Office of Cuba Broadcasting

(Radio and TV Martí)  
4201 NW 77th Avenue  
Miami, FL 33166  
Telephone: 305-437-7000  
Fax: 305-437-7016  
[www.martinoticias.com](http://www.martinoticias.com)

## Radio Free Asia

2025 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Telephone: 202-530-4900  
Fax: 202-530-7794  
[www.rfa.org](http://www.rfa.org)

## Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Inc.

(Alhurra Television  
and Radio Sawa)  
7600 Boston Boulevard  
Springfield, VA 22153  
Telephone: 703-852-9000  
Fax: 703-852-9002  
[www.alhurra.com](http://www.alhurra.com)  
[www.radiosawa.com](http://www.radiosawa.com)

# Specials

On back cover: VOA's Shaista Mangal reports from Afghanistan.





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