

TV MARTI: A STATION IN SEARCH OF AN AUDIENCE?

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

—————
JUNE 17, 2009
—————

Serial No. 111-29
—————

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/>

—————
U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

50-506PDF

WASHINGTON : 2009

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800
Fax: (202) 512-2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402-0001

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HOWARD L. BERMAN, California, *Chairman*

GARY L. ACKERMAN, New York	ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, Florida
ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA, American Samoa	CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, New Jersey
DONALD M. PAYNE, New Jersey	DAN BURTON, Indiana
BRAD SHERMAN, California	ELTON GALLEGLY, California
ROBERT WEXLER, Florida	DANA ROHRABACHER, California
ELIOT L. ENGEL, New York	DONALD A. MANZULLO, Illinois
BILL DELAHUNT, Massachusetts	EDWARD R. ROYCE, California
GREGORY W. MEEKS, New York	RON PAUL, Texas
DIANE E. WATSON, California	JEFF FLAKE, Arizona
RUSS CARNAHAN, Missouri	MIKE PENCE, Indiana
ALBIO SIRES, New Jersey	JOE WILSON, South Carolina
GERALD E. CONNOLLY, Virginia	JOHN BOOZMAN, Arkansas
MICHAEL E. McMAHON, New York	J. GRESHAM BARRETT, South Carolina
JOHN S. TANNER, Tennessee	CONNIE MACK, Florida
GENE GREEN, Texas	JEFF FORTENBERRY, Nebraska
LYNN WOOLSEY, California	MICHAEL T. McCAUL, Texas
SHEILA JACKSON LEE, Texas	TED POE, Texas
BARBARA LEE, California	BOB INGLIS, South Carolina
SHELLEY BERKLEY, Nevada	GUS BILIRAKIS, Florida
JOSEPH CROWLEY, New York	
MIKE ROSS, Arkansas	
BRAD MILLER, North Carolina	
DAVID SCOTT, Georgia	
JIM COSTA, California	
KEITH ELLISON, Minnesota	
GABRIELLE GIFFORDS, Arizona	
RON KLEIN, Florida	

RICHARD J. KESSLER, *Staff Director*
YLEEM POLETE, *Republican Staff Director*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,
HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT

BILL DELAHUNT, Massachusetts, *Chairman*

RUSS CARNAHAN, Missouri	DANA ROHRABACHER, California
KEITH ELLISON, Minnesota	RON PAUL, Texas
DONALD M. PAYNE, New Jersey	TED POE, Texas
ROBERT WEXLER, Florida	

CLIFF STAMMERMAN, *Subcommittee Staff Director*
PAUL BERKOWITZ, *Republican Professional Staff Member*
BRIAN FORNI, *Staff Associate*

CONTENTS

	Page
WITNESSES	
Mr. Jess Ford, Director, International Affairs and Trade Team, Government Accountability Office	8
Mr. Philip Peters, Vice President, Lexington Institute	21
John Nichols, Ph.D., Professor of Communications and International Affairs, Penn State University	28
Mr. Tim Shamble, President, American Federation of Government Employees, Local 1812	37
LETTERS, STATEMENTS, ETC., SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING	
Mr. Jess Ford: Prepared statement	10
Mr. Philip Peters: Prepared statement	24
John Nichols, Ph.D.: Prepared statement	30
Mr. Tim Shamble: Prepared statement	40
APPENDIX	
Hearing notice	50
Hearing minutes	51
John Nichols, Ph.D.: Material submitted for the record	52

TV MARTI: A STATION IN SEARCH OF AN AUDIENCE?

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2009

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,
HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:20 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Bill Delahunt (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. DELAHUNT. This hearing will come to order, and why don't I recognize the gentleman from California. Mr. Royce is joining us.

I want to welcome this very distinguished panel. I think I know three out of the four, and on a personal basis, and welcome. I also note some distinguished individuals in the audience.

But Mr. Royce has promised a brief and concise statement. It is the customary practice in this subcommittee to have no rules. We usually allow unlimited time, but the ranking member, Mr. Rohrabacher, and myself have a briefing that we must attend in, oh, 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Mr. Royce.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I have long been involved in this area of trying to bolster U.S. international broadcasts, and it is because I believe in the power of ideas. I remember our former budget chairman said you know, Royce, these efforts are less than the cost of a fuel cap on a B-52. And the fact is—and it is not sanctions, it is not use of force, it is not the other issues we have hotly debated—it is promoting the free flow of information. It is a way of supplying close insiders with information for those who are toiling against tyranny.

And I disagree with the premise that because Cuba jams these broadcasts we should give up. I am sure there are flaws with TV Marti's operations. This is, after all, run by the Federal Government. But instead of exerting our energy, exposing the chinks in Marti's armor, why not put that effort into exploring ways to bolster the lifeline to democrats in Cuba? And the reason I say that is because I remember a few years ago we tried the airborne platform, Commando Solo, they call it. It is now private contractors that do that based in the U.S. Navy facilities in the Florida Keys. The Cuban response to that, of course, was flying airborne jamming platforms. So yes, it is a challenge to stay ahead of the jamming efforts.

But are we really fated to lose? I think not, if we use a little ingenuity. If our broadcasting to Cuba is a waste, as critics contend, then how come the government of Castro spends so much time in his efforts to block it, and the simple answer is they fear the free flow of information.

So ideas have consequences. I support bolstering efforts to inject as much information to Cuba as possible and TV Marti does it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Mr. Royce.

Today's hearing fulfills one of the core responsibilities of Congress, and this committee in particular, to ensure taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely and effectively. In this case, the United States taxpayer has spent over half a billion—that is with a “b”—dollars on two government-run stations that broadcast to Cuba. Radio Marti and TV Marti are based in Miami and are managed by the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, known by its acronym as OCB.

The stated mission of these broadcasts is to support the Cuban people's right to information and to give them objective news. But as the gentleman from California indicated, TV Marti is jammed by the Cuban Government and almost no one in Cuba can watch it.

Furthermore, it has been subject to an enormous amount of controversy, including allegations about biased broadcasts, to questionable programming, to reports of nepotism, to political manipulation, to criminal charges of corruption. And note that it isn't simply allegations. Last year, TV Marti's program director was convicted of taking over \$100,000 in kickbacks and sentenced to 27 months in prison. And the current director of OCB, who is a holdover, hired his wife's nephew as his chief of staff even though he had no previous experience in broadcasting.

This is echoes of another U.S. Government program purportedly to promote democracy in Cuba. Several years ago I asked the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, to look into that spending. It turned out that it was extremely difficult to determine where exactly the money went. But it was clear that not all went to Cuba. The GAO discovered that some of it was spent in Miami on chocolates and Sony play stations and cashmere sweaters. It was later discovered that an employee of the largest grantee was topping off purchases meant for dissidents for his own use to the tune of some \$11 million, rather, \$11,000, at Costco. In this building you get used to millions and billions, so. . . . And a former chief of staff of the second largest grantee was just sentenced to 30 months in prison for stealing \$600,000 in Federal funds.

Now, that is not a pretty picture.

In any case, what is important for our purposes today is the fundamental question of whether the taxpayers are receiving a fair return on their investment. Is there a better way? Is there a more cost effective way of transmitting objective information to the Cuban people, spreading American values and, most importantly, is anyone watching TV Marti?

Now TV Marti has been examined by various bodies, including the International Broadcasting Bureau, which oversees, has the statutory responsibility of overseeing OCB, Office of Cuba Broadcasting, and the State Department Inspector General. Most reviews

have found serious problems, often the same problems, over and over and over again. Only one review ever gave a positive grade, and that was a highly questionable Department of State Inspector General report in 2007 that many investigators do not take seriously. In fact, the State IG at the time was later forced to resign amid charges of political cover up when he interfered with the Department of Justice investigation in an unrelated matter.

So I requested the GAO to conduct a thorough scrub, if you will. As we all concur, GAO is the gold standard when it comes to examining government programs, and I want to publicly praise them for their work. What GAO found in this case was that there was continuing problems with employee morale, with adherence to journalistic standards, with sloppy contracting, with little transparency in the hire of so-called talent contractors. But what is most striking is that, according to the most reliable figures compiled by the International Broadcasting Bureau, TV Marti has less than a 1 percent audience in Cuba, less than 1 percent.

Now, I am going to quote from the GAO report. This is the language from the report itself. None, zero, of the 533 respondents to IBB's telephone survey living in Havana reported watching TV Marti broadcasts during the past 12 months. Yet TV Marti consumes the lion's share of the transmission budget for both stations.

In Fiscal Year 2008, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting spent \$8.5 million on transmissions. Over \$7.5 million of that number was for TV Marti, and \$6 million of that was to fly a plane to broadcast to Havana, to Cuba. But by IBB's own figures, it made no difference whatsoever in terms of TV Marti's audience.

That is why today the hearing is entitled "TV Marti: A Station in Search of an Audience?" Because I wanted to focus on what seems to me to be a most egregious waste of money. TV Marti does not seem to have an audience. It is a station that no one watches. So why spend all the money on it? If something isn't working, doing more of the same most likely will not produce a different result.

Anecdotally, I had a conversation within the past 4 or 5 months with a respected journalist, whom I won't identify but has spent considerable time in Cuba reporting for a major media outlet, and that individual, in the 10 years that that individual has been there, has never met a Cuban that has ever seen TV Marti. And that particular reporter interfaces with everyone in Cuba, including the dissidents who I know personally and to those who are desirous of an emerging civil society. Not once was there, in the entire 10-year period, was there discovered an individual who watched TV Marti.

Now in its latest budget proposal, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which is in charge of OCB, has suggested changing the format of TV Marti and cutting some staff as a cost-saving measure. But there are concerns as to whether this is enough of a change in focus and whether some of these staff reductions may be retaliation for whistleblowers who spoke to the GAO. Once the Obama administration picks a permanent director for the OCB, I intend to explore that particular concern further.

Because it is important to keep in mind as well the larger context, the United States and Cuban Governments have indicated a willingness to dialogue. Cuban Americans can now travel to Cuba

whenever they want, as much as they want, while most Americans are still prohibited from visiting, but that may change as well.

In this context, does it make sense to continue to conduct these broadcasts? Should we experiment with newer and different technologies? I know that the testimony of Mr. Shamble was thought provoking. Or should we simply scrap TV Marti and trust the American people to spread our values to Cuba?

Let me be clear. In its current form, I consider TV Marti a colossal waste of taxpayer dollars. But I am open to new ideas. If there are alternative ways to deliver video product, I am happy to listen. I also realize that change is difficult. It takes time. So to be responsible to the taxpayers, we should have a public discussion on this issue, and that is why we are here today. And I, as chair, and I know my ranking member will also welcome any ideas that anyone who might have passionate views on the issue of Cuba want to provide to us.

And before I recognize the gentleman, my friend and ranking member from California, let me note the presence of the ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Mr. Connie Mack, and the gentlelady from California, Ms. Laura Richardson. Welcome. Customarily I would welcome opening statements from just about anybody that sat up here but, as I indicated, Mr. Rohrabacher and I will be the only ones today because we are heading to a briefing that is of some consequence.

Dana.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And just right off the bat, let me just note that I think instead of being focusing on scrapping Radio or TV Marti, we should be focused on how to scrap the Communist dictatorship that has oppressed the Cuban people for these last 50 years.

Fidel Castro came to power, overthrowing a rotten dictatorship under a guy named Batista, who had been a sergeant in the Cuban army, and he promised democracy and he promised freedom of speech. He promised freedom of religion. He promised it would be a democracy. He betrayed his people.

The current regime, the Castro regime, murdered the very democratic revolutionaries that helped put Castro in power. He betrayed not only his own people but his own cadre of revolutionaries. It is a despicable regime in a number of ways because Fidel Castro could have, had he been true to what he had been promising, led Cuba into an era of prosperity and peace. Instead, he allied Cuba with every anti-American regime that he could possibly make a deal with. And the fact is that that regime may now be, because of Castro's health, may be on its last legs.

The very last thing we need to do now is to send a message that in some way we are going to pull back from our long-time commitment for democracy in Cuba. We don't need to scrap Radio Marti. Some of the allegations that we just heard may well be true. But the symbolic nature of right now, where there is a chance for major change to take place in Cuba and to leave this vicious dictatorship behind, it would be unconscionable for us to send a wrong signal and much more costly in the long run to us. We should be looking to try to work with those people who believe in democracy and freedom and friendship with the United States. We should reach out

to those people right now, and sending them a message of no, we are closing down our communications now, even before any change has taken place, is exactly the wrong message.

Now in terms of some of the actual charges, there is no doubt that there has been a limited number of people who have been able to benefit from Radio Marti and TV Marti in Cuba. The Cuban Government has spent millions of dollars, very limited dollars I might add, jamming those stations, which should indicate something about that regime. Also, I might note, and I understand that there is a phone survey by the GAO that suggests that people are not listening to Radio Marti or TV Marti. Well, let me just note this, and I will be hopeful we will get an answer to this when we hear testimony on this. In a country that does not have a lot of telephones and what is the—how many households have telephones in Cuba—and when you live in a dictatorship if someone calls you to ask if you are listening to radio broadcasts that attack the dictatorship how many people are going to answer honestly? I mean, this doesn't take a genius to figure out that people don't answer telephone surveys in Cuba about their political beliefs.

As far as the journalistic friend of my friend and colleague and chairman, I will have to tell you that I give American journalists and their reporting of what has gone on in Cuba for the last 50 years, I give them a big F. I wouldn't trust any of them. The fact is Castro was misrepresented to the American people originally as a democratic liberator. Those were lies that were perpetuated and perpetrated on the American people by respected American journalists. And over the years we have never seen the type of in-depth coverage of the vicious nature of that regime that was justified by the type of activities that Castro was involved in.

So I can't take an anecdotal statement by a journalist who I don't know and I can't take a phone survey to say that is going to be an authoritative methodology for me to determine whether certain amounts of money are being wasted or not.

With that said, I certainly agree with the idea that we must make sure that anybody who is involved with kickbacks or misuse of our Federal dollars is discovered and prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and to that degree I think we need to make sure that the pressure is on from this committee and other committees to oversee that. But using this as an excuse to make a dramatic step, and even before there is reform, symbolically reducing our pressure would be exactly the wrong direction.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I thank the gentleman, and I understand that our friend from Florida, Mr. Mack, has a pressing engagement and is looking for 30 seconds. We will give him 1 minute to make a statement before excusing him.

Mr. MACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and also the ranking member, for allowing me to be here and giving me just 1 minute.

Mr. Chairman, I listened closely to your statement. And the feeling—first of all, I think we would all agree that the Castro brothers, it is a dictatorship, the human right violations, the brutality of this dictatorship is something that I think all of us can agree on and that it is not a good thing. And I, too, wanted to voice my concerns about basing a decision on responding to a telephone call

in Cuba asking whether or not you watch or listen to a broadcast that the brutal dictators do not want you to listen to or to watch, you can't trust that poll. Imagine the fear, and you can listen to just some of our colleagues who have had experiences growing up in Cuba, about how the people representing the Cuban Government would come into their homes and look for things that might be opposed, that show signs of being opposed to Castro. So imagine that phone call coming in, you probably believe that it is your own Government trying to crack down on you. So you cannot trust, I believe, a telephone survey in Cuba to base your decision on whether or not TV Marti is worth continuing.

You also have, so you have a range of somewhere between 21 percent to less than 1 percent. I would trust the people who have left Cuba who say that yeah, I was able to see TV Marti in Cuba. And so let's say you don't believe in the 21 percent. Let's say it is 10 percent. If you can provide a little hope for people who live in a country who are being, whose dreams are being crushed by Castro, Fidel and Raul Castro, that is the kind of hope that America should be for. And fighting for freedom doesn't mean that you get to fight all the time at 100 percent. But if you can reach at the high end 21 percent of the Cuban people with TV Marti, it is a worthwhile program for the United States to be involved in. And in no time is it more important than now for us to continue to spread a message of hope and give the people of Cuba, who are dying, who have a thirst for information, to give them that information, and taking away TV Marti, Radio Marti, does a disservice to the Cuban people and does a disservice to the people of our country.

So with that, I would just like to say I hope that when we look at these statistics that we view in them what they are. One has a hint of intimidation behind it, the other is based upon people who have left Cuba who are now living in freedom and have the ability to speak their mind without fear of their government either throwing them in jail or intimidating them and their families.

Thank you.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Mr. Mack. And we will proceed forthwith to—because I understand Ms. Richardson can join us for the remaining hearing. And we will move quickly because we want to keep you here.

I am going to begin by introducing Jess Ford, who is director of the International Affairs and Trade Division at the GAO. He joined the GAO in 1973 and has worked extensively in the national security, international affairs area concerning trade, foreign assistance and foreign policy issues. He has managed GAO audits of the Agency of International Development, the State Department, and the Department of Defense. He received a bachelor's degree in political science from Hiram College and a master's degree in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He is also a graduate of the National War College. He has received numerous awards throughout his GAO career.

Welcome, Jess.

Philip Peters is the vice president of the Lexington Institute. He has published studies based on regional field research in Cuba since 1996 with an emphasis on economic policy. He also analyzes

United States policy toward Cuba and writes a blog on Cuba issues. It is entitled the “Cuba Triangle,” and I would commend it.

He serves as an adviser to the Cuba Working Group in the House of Representatives and has organized nine congressional delegations to Cuba. Mr. Peters served in the State Department under President Ronald Reagan and George Herbert Walker Bush and holds degrees from Georgetown’s University School of Foreign Service and their graduate school.

John Nichols is a professor of communications and international affairs and associate dean for graduate studies and research in the College of Communications at the Pennsylvania State University. A member of that faculty since 1977, he is a specialist in international communications, comparative media systems, and international telecommunications policies. He has conducted research on Cuban communication issues for over three decades. He also has won Penn State’s Most Innovative Teacher Award in 1999 and has held many leadership posts at the university, including chair of the University Faculty Center.

Tim Shamble is currently president of the American Federation of Government Employees, Local 1812. He has been in that position since June 2000. He is on 100 percent official time with the union. His position of record is as a multimedia production specialist with the Voice of America. He is paid by the VOA, which is a subcomponent of the BBG, the Broadcasting Board of Governors. He represents the broadcasters and journalists of the VOA and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting. He began his government career in 1991 as a radio broadcast technician with Radio Marti. He has held a variety of positions with the union.

Jess, welcome, and why don’t we proceed with your testimony? But before you proceed, there is an interesting footnote, I think, in the report—this is in response to my friends Messrs. Mack and Rohrabacher—about person-to-person interviewing in Cuba, and I found it interesting to note that Broadcasting Board of Governors requested a license to go to Cuba and to conduct person-to-person interviews. It was denied by our own Government. I found that rather interesting.

At the same time, the IRI, which is a group to promote democracy under the auspices of the Republican Party, the Institute for Republican—the International Republican Institute—thank you—was granted a license and, in fact, did conduct person-to-person interviews, and that information is available. I found that rather mystifying. But again there are all kinds of mysteries going on. I am always reminded of that message about waiting a little bit longer. I think that is a song, “just a little bit longer.” And there is a noted columnist whom I have never met and have had no contact with who writes for the Miami Herald and most likely other outlets. His name is Andres Oppenheimer, and he appears to be well respected, who wrote a book which I read that was entitled the Final Days of Fidel Castro. The book was written in 1992.

Again, I think we have to be open to new ways of thinking. Clearly, this administration has charted a different course. It will continue a different course in terms of the bilateral relationship with Cuba. But when I hear about Cuba and we can’t show any weakness, 50 years is an awful long time. It is time for a change.

Mr. Ford.

STATEMENT OF MR. JESS FORD, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRADE TEAM, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Mr. FORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee. I am pleased to be here today to discuss GAO's work on United States television broadcasting to Cuba.

The United States has been broadcasting to Cuba for more than two decades via Radio Marti and TV Marti. The purpose of the broadcast is to break the information blockade and to promote freedom and democracy in Cuba.

United States television broadcasting to Cuba is performed by the Office of Cuba Broadcasting based in Miami and is overseen by the Broadcasting Board of Governors here in Washington. The OCB operates TV Marti, which broadcasts news, commentary, and entertainment to Cuba. At the request of this subcommittee, we have reviewed a variety of issues related to the effectiveness of OCB's television broadcasts.

My remarks today are based on two GAO reports issued in January of this year and July of last year. Based on your interest, I am going to focus my discussions primarily on TV Marti.

In brief, Mr. Chairman, we found certain actions are needed to improve the strategy and operations of United States television broadcasting to Cuba. For example, to assist decision makers in formulating a broadcast strategy and making funding decisions, we have recommended that the Board of Broadcasters assemble data to help assess the effectiveness on the various types of transmissions from OCB. We have made a number of other recommendations which I can discuss later.

OCB broadcasts to TV Marti Cuba through multiple transmission methods, but the best available research indicates that the audience is small. To overcome Cuban Government's efforts to jam its signals, OCB broadcasts TV Marti through over-the-air broadcasts by an airplane called Aero Marti and two satellites and the Internet.

During the past 3 years, OCB has allocated significantly more money to TV Marti transmissions, particularly the airplane, than radio transmissions. Due to the U.S. Government's lack of access to Cuba, OCB has difficulty obtaining nationally represented data on its audience size. And I want to emphasize this point, that our Government to date really has no overall good information on a national basis on audience size.

In addition, decision makers have limited information to help assess the relative success on a return of investment for each of the transmission methods. For example, it is not possible to determine from the broadcasting board's telephone surveys whether TV Marti's audience is due to the airplane, which costs about \$5 million a year to operate, or from direct TV transmission, which costs about a \$0.5 million annually.

While there are no nationally representative data on the size of the audience, the best available research from the IBB telephone surveys, of which there have been four since 2003, indicate that TV Marti's audience size is small. Specifically, the four telephone sur-

veys have reported less than 1 percent of the respondents had watched TV Marti in over the past week.

Most notably, the most recent surveys in 2006 and 2008 showed no increase in reported TV Marti viewership after the launch of the Aero Marti and direct broadcasting. OCB broadcasts face significant jamming by the Cuban Government. However, despite these efforts, they still lack reliable data on the number, type, and effectiveness of signal jammers. As a result, it is unclear how much of the television's signals can actually be seen or heard in Cuba.

We have also reported that while the BBG coordinates with other United States agencies on Cuba policy issues, it was not optimizing the use of audience research done by other agencies. We made a recommendation to the board that they coordinate more fully with other executive branch agencies that have information regarding audience information that OCB was not aware of at the time of our review.

We also note that the OCB still has not drafted a formal strategic plan that has been recommended by the State IG in 2007 and, as far as we know, that plan still has not been finalized.

With regard to the issue of journalistic standards, our review identified some problems with TV Marti's adherence to certain journalistic standards. Surveys done by the International Broadcasting Bureau indicated that in some cases there were a lack of compliance with basic standards, such as accuracy, balance, and objectivity. Since 2003, these types of reviews have made recommendations to OCB to improve their adherence to journalistic standards. However, OCB staff have received little training in compliance with journalistic standards. In our report we recommended that the BBG establish better training programs for OCB staff to ensure that these standards will be followed.

We also had a number of recommendations to improve the overall management and oversight of OCB. Among the type of issues that we reported was their need to enhance communications with their staff. We noted there were a number of cases of employee morale issues being low and that the board for broadcasting needed to work with OCB to enhance communications with their staff.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I just want to quickly go over the recommendations that we made in our report. I can tell you that we got a positive response from the board on all of these recommendations.

We first recommended that they do an analysis to look at the return on investment of each of the various transmission methods and to coordinate with other executive agencies, including the Department of State and AID, on the types of information that are out there based on their work. The OCB at the time, as I mentioned, had no knowledge of some of that research information.

We also recommended that they enhance guidance and training with regard to program reviews and also to ensure that they follow journalistic standards.

We also recommended that they provide staff with training in this area. We also recommended that they enhance communications and they also tighten up their contracting practices in response to our July report, which indicated that they had not followed sound business practices in contracting.

That concludes my statement. I will be happy to answer any of your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ford follows:]

United States Government Accountability Office

GAO

Testimony
Before the Subcommittee on International
Organizations, Human Rights, and
Oversight, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives

For Release on Delivery
Expected at 10:00 a.m. EST
Wednesday, June 17, 2009

BROADCASTING TO CUBA

Observations Regarding TV Martí's Strategy and Operations

Statement of Jess T. Ford, Director
International Affairs and Trade



Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss GAO's work on U.S. television broadcasting to Cuba. The United States has been broadcasting to Cuba for more than two decades via Radio Martí and, subsequently, TV Martí to "break the information blockade" and promote freedom and democracy in Cuba. U.S. television broadcasting to Cuba is performed by the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), which is a U.S. government entity, overseen by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), and based in Miami.¹ OCB operates TV Martí, which broadcasts news, commentary, and entertainment programming to Cuba. From the inception of these broadcasting efforts, various questions have been raised regarding their purpose, quality, and effectiveness. In light of the more than \$500 million that has been spent over the years on broadcasting to Cuba and OCB's almost \$35 million annual budget, we have reviewed a variety of issues related to the effectiveness of OCB's television broadcasts.

Since the inception of TV Martí in 1990, GAO has reported on longstanding weaknesses in TV Martí's operations.² My remarks today will be based on two recent GAO reports, issued in July 2008 and January 2009.³ Based on your interest, my remarks today will focus mainly on key observations regarding TV Martí. These observations include the following:

1. OCB's approach for broadcasting and what is known about the size of TV Martí's audience in Cuba.
2. How BBG and OCB ensure TV Martí's compliance with journalistic principles.

¹The BBG also oversees the operations of the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB), which provides broadcasting services to OCB.

²GAO, *Broadcasts to Cuba: TV Martí Surveys are Flawed*, GAO/NSIAD-90-252 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 9, 1990); GAO, *TV Martí: Costs and Compliance with Broadcast Standards and International Agreements*, GAO/NSIAD-92-199 (Washington, D.C.: May 6, 1992); GAO, *U.S. Information Agency: Issues Related to Reincorporation Planning in the Office of Cuba Broadcasting*, GAO/NSIAD-96-110 (Washington, D.C.: May 13, 1996).

³GAO, *Broadcasting to Cuba: Weaknesses in Contracting Practices Reduced Visibility into Selected Award Decisions*, GAO 08-764 (Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2008) and GAO, *Broadcasting to Cuba: Actions Are Needed to Improve Strategy and Operations*, GAO-09-127 (Washington, D.C.: January 22, 2009). Both of these reports were conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

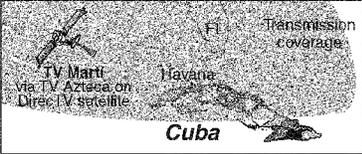
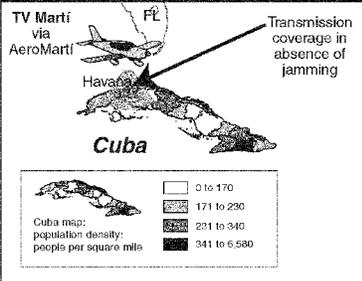
-
3. The steps taken to ensure that U.S. television broadcasting to Cuba adheres to domestic and international broadcasting laws, agreements, and standards.
 4. The steps that BBG and OCB have taken to address management and oversight challenges.
 5. BBG's International Broadcasting Bureau's (IBB) contract award process for television broadcasting to Cuba.

In brief, Mr. Chairman, we found certain actions are needed to improve the strategy and operations of U.S. television broadcasting efforts to Cuba. To assist decisionmakers in formulating the U.S. broadcasting strategy and making funding decisions, we recommended that BBG assemble data to help decisionmakers assess the effectiveness and return on investment of OCB's various transmission methods. We also made recommendations in other areas, such as operations and contracting practices, which BBG said it will implement.

**Broadcasting Approach
and Audience Size**

OCB broadcasts TV Martí to Cuba through multiple transmission methods, but the best available research indicates that its audience is small. To overcome the Cuban government's efforts to jam its signals, OCB broadcasts TV Martí through an "over-the-air" broadcast via an airplane (or AeroMartí), two satellites (DirecTV and Hispasat), and the Internet. Figure 1 shows—in the absence of Cuban jamming—the projected coverage, cost, and broadcast schedule of selected TV Martí transmissions.

Figure 1: Coverage, Cost, and Broadcast Schedule of Selected TV Marti Transmissions

Coverage	Cost	Schedule
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately \$500,000 per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3½ hours per day, 5 days a week (2 hours per day on weekends)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately \$5 million per year for air services and fuel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4½ hours per day, 6 days a week

Source: GAO analysis of Office of Cuba Broadcasting and International Broadcasting Bureau data; Nova Development (cibc.org); Map Art and Map Info (maps); and Cuba National Statistical Office (population density data).

During the past 3 years, OCB has allocated significantly more of its resources for additional TV Marti transmissions, particularly the airplane, than Radio Marti transmissions. Due to the U.S. government's lack of access to Cuba, OCB has difficulty obtaining nationally representative data on its audience size. In addition, decisionmakers have limited information to help assess the relative success or return on investment from each of OCB's various transmission methods. For example, it is impossible to determine from IBB's telephone surveys whether TV Marti's audience is due to AeroMartí, which costs about \$5.0 million annually, or the DirecTV transmission, which costs about \$0.5 million annually. While there are no nationally representative data on the size of OCB's audience, the best

available audience research—IBB telephone surveys—indicates that TV Marti's audience size is small.⁴ Specifically, less than 1 percent of respondents to IBB telephone surveys since 2003 reported that they had watched TV Marti during the past week.⁵ Notably, results from the 2006 and 2008 telephone surveys show no increase in reported TV Marti viewership following the launch of AeroMarti and DirectTV broadcasting in 2006. OCB broadcasts face jamming by the Cuban government. However, despite some efforts by IBB and OCB, they still lack reliable data on the number, type, and effectiveness of the signal jammers. As a result, it is unclear how much of the television signals can be heard and seen in Cuba.

Also, while OCB officials emphasized the changing media environment in Cuba and an increase in domestic and international broadcast competition as challenges for OCB in attracting and maintaining an audience, OCB could do more to address the challenges posed by its competitors in the Cuban media environment. Furthermore, although BBG coordinates with other agencies regarding U.S. policy toward Cuba, coordination is minimal on issues such as audience research. Finally, even though the United States has been broadcasting to Cuba for more than two decades, OCB lacks a formal strategic plan approved by BBG to guide decision-making on its funding and operations, such as its recent proposal to change TV Marti's newscasts' schedule from two, half hour evening newscasts to five minute news updates every half hour in fiscal year 2010.

⁴Other information suggests that TV Marti's audience may be larger. For example, 21 percent of recent Cuban émigrés responding to a nonrandom, 2007 OCB survey reported watching TV Marti within the last 6 months before leaving Cuba. However, these results likely do not represent the actual size of TV Marti's audience.

⁵IBB's telephone surveys are IBB's only random data collection effort in Cuba, but these data might not be representative of Cubans' media habits for two main reasons: (1) Only adults in homes with published telephone numbers are surveyed, and, according to BBG documents, approximately 17 percent of Cuban adults live in households with published telephone numbers, and (2) BBG and OCB officials noted that, because individuals in Cuba are discouraged or prohibited by their government from watching U.S. international broadcasts, they might be fearful of responding to media surveys and disclosing their media habits, and thus actual audience size might be larger than survey results. However, in each of the telephone surveys conducted since 2005, interviewers indicated that 6 percent or less of respondents expressed or demonstrated signs of fear when answering questions over the telephone.

Compliance with Journalistic Standards

IBB's annual reviews have identified problems with TV Martí broadcasts' adherence to certain journalistic standards, but IBB's review process has some weaknesses. IBB has an annual program review process that serves as the main tool for assessing TV Martí broadcasts' compliance with journalistic standards, such as accuracy, balance, and objectivity. Since 2003, IBB reviews have made recommendations to improve TV Martí's adherence to certain journalistic standards, particularly related to ensuring balance and objectivity. However, OCB staff have received little training regarding compliance with journalistic standards and, in general, OCB has not ensured full implementation of IBB's recommendations. IBB has recently developed a process for improving its oversight of the implementation of such recommendations. While we found that IBB's process provides useful feedback regarding broadcast content and production quality, we identified several aspects of the process that could be improved. For example, IBB's qualitative reviews lacked consistency in their methodology and reporting and often do not clearly state whether the broadcasts are in full compliance with journalistic standards. In addition, while the program analysts who perform the reviews receive training regarding language, regional expertise, and technical production, they have received limited training for skills—such as program evaluation—that would assist them in conducting program reviews.

Adherence to Domestic and International Broadcasting Laws, Agreements, and Standards

While IBB and OCB have taken a variety of steps to help ensure that U.S. television broadcasting to Cuba adheres to domestic and international broadcasting laws, agreements, and standards, several concerns remain. The Smith-Mundt Act²² generally prohibits the domestic dissemination of public diplomacy information intended for foreign audiences, although legislation authorizing TV Martí allows some domestic dissemination in limited circumstances. IBB and OCB have taken a variety of steps to minimize the domestic dissemination of TV Martí programming. For example, according to IBB officials, in deciding which television station to contract with to place TV Martí programming on DirecTV, they evaluated the geographic coverage of each station's broadcasting, with the intent of minimizing domestic dissemination. However, TV Martí broadcasts reach U.S. audiences in several ways. For example, residents of Miami can watch TV Martí programming on local cable or DirecTV, and anyone can access streaming video from OCB's Web site. In addition, some commercials

²²22 U.S.C. § 1461. Originally enacted as Section 501 of the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, this law is commonly known as the Smith-Mundt Act.

shown by a Miami television station contracted to air TV Marti programming had contained paid political advertisements during the programming, which IBB typically prohibits. BBG officials told us the standard contract language prohibiting the airing of political advertisements was inadvertently left out of the contract with the Miami television station. According to these officials, they have taken steps to address this problem. However, no similar standard contract language prohibiting other potentially inappropriate commercials existed, at that time. Finally, in response to complaints by the Cuban government, the international body that serves as a forum for such disputes—the International Telecommunication Union—found that U.S. television broadcasts cause harmful interference with Cuban broadcasts. State officials indicated that no action had been taken in response to the International Telecommunication Union's determinations that U.S. television broadcasts caused harmful interference.

Management and Oversight Challenges

Despite some efforts by BBG and OCB, some oversight and management problems persist. Several entities—including BBG, IBB, and the State Office of Inspector General—provide oversight of OCB operations. For example, the State Office of Inspector General has performed three inspections and audits related to OCB since 1999, each of which resulted in multiple recommendations. These various oversight efforts have identified three main categories of problems in recent years: poor communication by OCB management, low employee morale, and allegations of fraud and abuse.⁷ For example, the State Office of Inspector General has reported on OCB employee desire to improve communication, and a recent Office of Personnel Management survey found that a majority of OCB employees who responded expressed concern about the information they receive from management on what is going on in the organization. OCB employees have specifically expressed frustration with the lack of any formal system for disseminating information from management to staff or for staff to provide input to management. In responding to recent audit reports, BBG and OCB have taken steps to address nearly all of the auditors' recommendations.

⁷One allegation of fraud and abuse, which BBG brought to the attention of the State Office of Inspector General, has been substantiated in recent years. Investigators from our Office of Forensic Audits and Special Investigation found some indications of mismanagement, but much of the evidence was anecdotal or hearsay and did not provide a sufficient basis upon which to continue the investigation.

Contracting Practices

In July 2008, we reported on our evaluation of the processes that IBB used to award a contract to a Miami-based broadcasting television station to broadcast TV Marti. In December 2006, IBB leased airtime on TV Azteca, a commercial television station in Miami that is carried on the DirecTV satellite. However, IBB's approach for awarding the TV Azteca contract did not reflect sound business practices in certain key aspects. Government contracting laws and regulations provide agencies flexibility to use noncompetitive procedures, if adequately justified, to meet their needs. In certain respects, however, IBB did not document in its contract files key information or assumptions underlying its decisions to not seek competitive offers, limit the number of potential providers it considered, or the basis used to negotiate the final prices for the services provided. In addition, IBB did not actively involve its contracting office until just prior to contract award. Furthermore, while justifying the December 2006 award of the contract on the basis of urgent and compelling need and the determination that only one source would meet its minimum needs, IBB chose to exercise multiple options on the contract to extend the period of performance into 2008 and took limited steps to determine how it might compete future broadcasting requirements. Collectively, these weaknesses underscored the need for IBB and OCB to improve their practices to enhance competition, improve transparency, and ensure accountability.

Prior Recommendations

In our July 2008 and January 2009 reports, we made several recommendations to BBG to improve OCB's strategy and operations. We recommended that BBG conduct an analysis of the relative return on investment from OCB's various transmission methods and coordinate with other agencies, such as the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development, to obtain additional information regarding the obstacles and effectiveness of TV Marti. We also recommended that BBG direct IBB to enhance guidance and training for program analysts conducting program reviews and take steps to ensure that political or other inappropriate advertisements do not air during OCB programming. In addition, we recommended that BBG direct OCB to provide staff with training regarding journalistic standards and establish mechanisms to improve communication with employees. With regards to contracting, we recommended that the BBG reinforce existing policy and guidance to plan for and employ appropriate competitive approaches, adequately document key decisions, and ensure the timely involvement of stakeholders.

Following the issuance of our reports, BBG indicated that it would take steps to address our recommendations. For example, to address our recommendation that OCB conduct an analysis of the relative success and

return on investment of OCB's individual transmission methods, BBG indicated that it would conduct this analysis using surveys that include questions on the reception of OCB's various transmission methods. In response to our recommendations, BBG also indicated that it aimed to provide an enhanced, comprehensive training for its program analysts who review OCB's compliance with journalistic standards, as well as training to OCB staff regarding journalistic standards. With regards to contracting, IBB issued a memorandum reminding all offices of critical acquisition requirements, including the need to ensure that acquisition files are thoroughly documented with all information and assumptions supporting key decision factors.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I will be happy to answer any questions you or the other Subcommittee members may have.

**GAO Contact and
Staff
Acknowledgments**

For more information regarding this testimony, please contact me at (202) 512-4128 or fordj@gao.gov. Jason Bair (Assistant Director), Emily Gupta, Leigh Ann Nally, and Katherine Trimble made key contributions to this testimony. Technical assistance was provided by Joseph Camey, Martin De Alteriis, John Hutton, Ernie Jackson, Armetha Liles, and Elizabeth Singer.



This is a work of the U.S. government and is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. The published product may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without further permission from GAO. However, because this work may contain copyrighted images or other material, permission from the copyright holder may be necessary if you wish to reproduce this material separately.

GAO's Mission	The Government Accountability Office, the audit, evaluation, and investigative arm of Congress, exists to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the American people. GAO examines the use of public funds; evaluates federal programs and policies; and provides analyses, recommendations, and other assistance to help Congress make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions. GAO's commitment to good government is reflected in its core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability.
Obtaining Copies of GAO Reports and Testimony	The fastest and easiest way to obtain copies of GAO documents at no cost is through GAO's Web site (www.gao.gov). Each weekday afternoon, GAO posts on its Web site newly released reports, testimony, and correspondence. To have GAO e-mail you a list of newly posted products, go to www.gao.gov and select "E-mail Updates."
Order by Phone	<p>The price of each GAO publication reflects GAO's actual cost of production and distribution and depends on the number of pages in the publication and whether the publication is printed in color or black and white. Pricing and ordering information is posted on GAO's Web site, http://www.gao.gov/ordering.htm.</p> <p>Place orders by calling (202) 512-6000, toll free (866) 801-7077, or TDD (202) 512-2537.</p> <p>Orders may be paid for using American Express, Discover Card, MasterCard, Visa, check, or money order. Call for additional information.</p>
To Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Federal Programs	<p>Contact:</p> <p>Web site: www.gao.gov/fraudnet/fraudnet.htm E-mail: fraudnet@gao.gov Automated answering system: (800) 424-5454 or (202) 512-7470</p>
Congressional Relations	Ralph Dawn, Managing Director, dawnr@gao.gov , (202) 512-4400 U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7125 Washington, DC 20548
Public Affairs	Chuck Young, Managing Director, youngc1@gao.gov , (202) 512-4800 U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7149 Washington, DC 20548



Mr. DELAHUNT. Next let me go to Mr. Phil Peters.

**STATEMENT OF MR. PHILIP PETERS, VICE PRESIDENT,
LEXINGTON INSTITUTE**

Mr. PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I want to commend you once again for examining our policy toward Cuba.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Also, excuse me if you will, but let me note the arrival of the gentleman from Arizona, who is the Republican chair of the Cuba Working Group and has been an ardent fighter against waste and inefficiency in government since his election to this institution. And I want to further acknowledge the presence of the vice chair of the committee, the gentleman from Missouri, my good friend, Russ Carnahan.

Mr. PETERS. I will proceed. Again thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to commend you and the committee for holding this hearing. I think that people, regardless of where we are in terms of our views about our Cuba policy, I think that it is—we can agree it is a policy that has not been examined well and that we can all benefit from greater examination of it. So I congratulate you on these hearings you are holding.

I enjoyed Mr. Rohrabacher's statement and while I don't agree you with you, Mr. Rohrabacher, about the work that our journalists, that Americans and other journalists do in Cuba, you brought to mind Herbert Matthews of the New York Times who was duped by Fidel Castro when he was a guerrilla in the mountains there. It prompted William Buckley some time later to do a cover of National Review, he put Castro on the cover with the headline, "I got my job through the New York Times."

Let me get to the point though. We are talking about TV Marti. I don't plan to say anything about Radio Marti, certainly much less to say we should get rid of it. But I think that TV Marti as a government program, not to be flip about it, is a joke. I think that everybody gets the joke except the Congress and except the successive administrations. So for 19 years the money keeps rolling, the program has no practical effect, and it just keeps rolling on.

There is no talk—you can talk to people in Cuba. You ask them about Radio and TV Marti, and the answer you get is typical. They will talk about Radio Marti. They have got something to say about it, something they have heard about it, something they have heard on it. They will recall something, and there are famous stories about Radio Marti stories that had an impact.

There are no stories like that about Television Marti. I mean it is the only TV station I think in history where there is a debate after 19 years as to whether there is an audience for it or not.

There is a lot of evidence, I talk to people around Cuba, I have tried to talk to people that have networks to bishops to reporters to diplomats, people who have networks throughout the country. They report nothing in terms of TV Marti audience.

Just to take two indicia, there was a statement of just last year by three—no, just a few months ago—by three major dissident groups that encompass all the dissidents that we know, all the leaders of all the groups, and they said in a letter to President

Obama, among other things, that the signal of TV Marti “simply does not reach Cuban homes.”

Secondly, I will mention that in 2007 the State Department issued a report, the State Department Inspector General, and they disclosed that our diplomatic mission in Cuba, the U.S. Interest Section, has a network of 15 people all around the country who monitor Radio and TV Marti. The results that we get from these monitors, the State Department reported are “bleak.” And they reported “that the TV Marti signal, quote, can rarely if ever be received.”

Now, in the end this is not a joke. Public diplomacy is serious. I believe in public diplomacy. I believe in the tradition of all the radios that Mr. Shamble and his colleagues worked at all throughout the Cold War. I don’t know how we have gotten ourselves in a position where this particular instrument of public diplomacy is a test of everyone’s manhood with regard to communism in Cuba. It is a tactic. It is not an end in itself. And I think the only thing that TV Marti has challenged is that Congress truly cares about the taxpayer money. Nineteen years, no practical effect, no audience. And the money keeps rolling.

I don’t think it is a sign of weakness to kill TV Marti. I think we should kill TV Marti. It doesn’t work. What is a sign of weakness is to keep going a program that has no practical effect and to pretend that it does when there is an opportunity cost attached with that. We spend about \$10 million a year on it, and we could do with that \$10 million a year something that actually does communicate with Cubans. And I think that is the challenge for all of us regardless of how we come at the issue, is to think how can we, since we all care about communication with Cuba and with Cubans, can we take this money, if you could save the taxpayers the money, we would all appreciate that. But if you want to dedicate it to public diplomacy, dedicate it to something that works.

One thing might be to use it to improve Radio Marti, although I would urge skepticism on that score because there are a lot of things in government, that throwing more money at them doesn’t solve the problem. If the problem with Radio Marti is that it is not interesting enough for people to listen to or that there is bias that turns Cubans off, well, money is not the issue there. That is an issue of professional standards and rigorous journalistic standards that are enshrined in the VOA charter.

But as Mr. Delahunt says, if there is a money issue, I would encourage you to look at that. But why not look at other instruments of public diplomacy? You are not going to like this, Mr. Rohrabacher, but I strongly believe that public diplomacy is not just for the government. I don’t think the government should have a monopoly on it and I think our influence with foreign publics derives not just from government programs where you take our money but from when the government gets out of our way and gives us our liberty, in this case to travel and to unleash American travelers and the power of American civil society to go to Cuba and engage with Cubans in all walks of life.

Secondly, why not look at these programs that you already spend millions and millions on in the State Department’s Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau that connect Americans with people in all

walks of life in countries all over the world in all kinds of political systems? You appropriate that money; you authorize that money because it is effective. Why not take a look at that in the case of Cuba? Why not also look at the private sector? There are many possibilities there.

I mentioned one in my written statement, which I ask that you include in the record, Mr. Chairman, which is one that was developed at MIT. It is called the One Laptop Per Child Program. It is an educational program where geniuses at MIT have developed a \$200 laptop that has educational content on it and that networks among these laptops, again, \$200 a copy. And so it creates education, and it is a communications device. Now that would require engaging with Cuba. Maybe they wouldn't want to do it, but the possibilities are endless. Don't take my word for it. But I encourage you to task the State Department to look at the possibilities and see what the options are.

I think it is something we would all probably agree on that if TV Marti didn't exist and we were thinking now about public diplomacy with regard to Cuba, we probably wouldn't think about building a TV station, a foreign government TV station to broadcast into Cuba.

Right now, we are all pretty consumed with what is happening in Iran, and the communication that is coming from Iran is incredible. It is citizen driven. It is the opposite of a top-down television station. It has nothing to do with government. It has nothing to do with media organizations. It is citizen driven. And so much of what we know from Iran now is because people have a cell phone and they get audio and they get video and they send text over their cell phone.

We are in a different age, and TV is really from a different age.

Finally, I will just refer to what President Reagan said about public diplomacy when he was defending and promoting exchanges with the Soviet Union in 1984. He said that civilized people everywhere have a stake in keeping contacts, communication, and creativity as broad, deep, and free as possible. And the way that governments can best promote contacts, President Reagan said, among people, is by not standing in the way.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Peters follows:]

TV Marti: An Idea Whose Time Has Come – and Gone

Statement of Philip Peters
Vice President, Lexington Institute

Before the Subcommittee on International Organizations,
Human Rights and Oversight

Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives

June 17, 2009

Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate the opportunity to join you today to discuss TV Marti in the context of U.S. policy toward Cuba.

I support public diplomacy in the large sense of that term, encompassing information and ideas that our government directs to foreign publics; scholarship and visitor programs that give foreign nationals chances to live, study, and work in America; and policies that allow free, unregulated contact between Americans and people overseas. Vigorous public diplomacy is an expression of American confidence, and it's an underrated, cost-effective foreign policy tool that boosts our influence around the world.

TV Marti is a classic instrument of public diplomacy, an attempt to go beyond the radio signals of the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and Radio Marti, and to bring television programming to our neighbors in Cuba.

Last March 27, TV Marti marked 19 years on the air. It also marked 19 years without a discernible audience in Cuba.

TV Marti has been broadcast from balloons floating in the air over Florida, from satellites in outer space, and now from an airplane that flies figure eights in U.S. airspace south of the Florida Keys.

Nineteen years of effort have not overcome Cuba's jamming. I don't think it's possible to find a broadcast engineer who will explain how a television signal that originates more than 50 miles from its audience, can ever overcome jammers that are located amid the target audience. We cannot repeal the laws of physics.

Among all the difficult decisions this Committee makes in its jurisdiction, I would think this would be the easiest: to pull the plug on TV Marti. Lots of good intentions and hard work cannot overcome the fact that this project is, and has long been, an affront to the American taxpayer.

Some might argue that ending TV Marti would be a concession to the Cuban government, a sign of retreat. By the same token, one could argue that a pitcher who can't locate his curve ball is backing down by switching to sliders and change-ups. Both arguments are absurd – TV Marti is a tactic, not an end in itself, and it is certainly not a test of anyone's fortitude with regard to communism in Cuba.

If anything, TV Marti itself manifests weakness – it's a communication program that communicates with no one, and it wastes \$10 million per year that could be used in other ways actually to communicate with Cubans. Only in government could such a program prosper for 19 years, into its fourth Administration and its eleventh Congress.

"No se ve"

How do we know that TV Marti has no discernible audience?

There is evidence, but I urge you to start with your intuition.

First, have you ever heard of a TV station that has been on the air for 19 years, and where there is an active debate after 19 years as to whether its signal reaches the audience? Every day people debate the quality of TV stations, or their audience size, but we never debate whether a station actually appears on your TV if you tune in. The United States government has created the first TV station in history to achieve that distinction.

Second, has anyone ever heard an anecdote from Cuba about TV Marti programming? I have heard none in 19 years, and have seen evidence of none. That's not so in the case of Radio Marti. If one asks in Cuba, one does find Cubans who have heard Radio Marti and have an opinion of it. Or we recall that in 2002, for better or worse, Radio Marti broadcasts were said to have provoked a famous incident at Mexico's embassy in Havana. There is no similar story about TV Marti, and that should tell us something.

Now for evidence.

I cannot recall how many times I have asked Cubans in Cuba, all across Cuba, about TV Marti and have received the same answer: *"No se ve"* ("It's not seen"). For years, I have asked diplomats and clergy and journalists who travel regularly around the island, and get the same answer. I recall a conversation that a member of this Committee and I had with a dissident in Cuba in 2004, where he asked about TV Marti and she called it "virtual TV Marti." Other travelers to Cuba report the same results.

A report last March by the BBC's correspondent in Havana was typical: "I don't know anyone in Cuba who has seen TV Martí," he wrote.

In August 2007, Cubanet reported on comments by a group of dissidents in a videoconference; the report said they were in "consensus" that "work should be done so that the [TV Martí] signal may fulfill its purpose." To me, that's a slightly cryptic way of saying that the signal isn't seen.

Then last April, there was a more direct statement in a letter that the dissident groups Todos Unidos, Unidad Liberal de la República de Cuba, and Agenda para la Transición sent to President Obama. Those groups include virtually all the dissidents with whom we are familiar. Their letter said TV Martí's signal "simply does not reach Cuban homes."

In December 2003, the Broadcasting Board of Governors reported that its surveys showed that TV Martí had a 0.3 percent audience share.

Last January, GAO reported that "the best available audience research," indicates that "Radio and TV Martí's audience size is small, with less than 2 percent of respondents to telephone surveys since 2003 reporting that they had tuned in to Radio or TV Martí during the past week." By contrast, GAO reported, "over 90 percent of telephone survey respondents said they watched Cuba's national television broadcasts during the past week," and 60 to 70 percent report that they listen to three Cuban radio stations. Also: "OCB [Office fo Cuba Broadcasting] officials said that the quality of Cuban television programming has recently improved and includes popular U.S. programming (such as The Sopranos and Grey's Anatomy)."

And finally, I'll note that a 2007 report from the State Department Inspector General disclosed that the U.S. Interests Section in Havana has enlisted people at 15 sites throughout Cuba to monitor Radio and TV Martí. These monitors' reports, the State Department says, provide a "bleak" assessment of TV Martí – it "can rarely if ever be received."

What to do?

This reporting – from independent observers, from dissidents, from our own government – leads to a clear conclusion that Congress stop funding a program that has proven utterly ineffective for 19 years.

At that point, there are several options for the money you would save.

First would be to simply stop spending the money and to make a miniscule contribution to attacking our national debt, which everyone's children and grandchildren would appreciate.

Another option is to use the money to improve Radio Martí. That is a worthy goal, but before spending the money there, I would urge skepticism on your part. Radio Martí is

changing to an all-news format, which may make its operation less expensive. And it is not clear that improvements that Radio Marti might need, such as newsroom management that is relentlessly committed to balance and objectivity, require money to implement.

What I would urge is a fresh look by Congress and the Administration at our public diplomacy goals with respect to Cuba, and at all the tools available to achieve them.

I would urge you to begin that re-examination by recognizing that public diplomacy is not a government monopoly. While our government has many good public diplomacy programs, private Americans and American civil society are also sources of American influence.

There is no more effective way to increase communication with the Cuban people than to approve Chairman Delahunt's legislation to end all restrictions on American travel to Cuba. This concept was at the heart of the West's successful approach to the Soviet bloc when we supported the free movement of people in the Helsinki accords; it was at the heart of President Reagan's promotion of unrestricted exchanges with the Soviet Union. In the first months after enactment, the flow of information and ideas on the part of individual travelers and our nation's vibrant civil society – universities, professional associations, humanitarian and religious groups, cultural and sports organizations – would far outweigh the impact of two decades of funds spent on TV Marti.

If TV Marti funds were to be redirected to programs related to Cuba, I would urge you to look at the classic public diplomacy programs in the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. These are tested programs with track records, and they have operated in many kinds of political environment. They include a wide variety of exchange and visitor programs in all fields, including programs that send American students and academics abroad, and that bring foreign students here. If you estimate the total expenditure on TV Marti at \$10 million per year for 19 years, that \$190 million could have brought 7,600 Cuban students to America for one-year study programs costing \$25,000 apiece.

I would also urge you to look at the private sector. One example is the One Laptop Per Child program, an educational program developed at MIT by Professor Nicholas Negroponte. The program was driven by American ingenuity and a desire to use the power of computing and network communication to improve education around the world. The program developed its own laptop, the XO, which costs about \$200 and allows users to communicate with each other through a wireless mesh network, so that all users in a local area are interconnected. TV Marti's 19-year budget would have paid for 950,000 XO laptops for Cuban children.

Those are three suggestions for increasing contact and communication with the Cuban people. There are many more, and that is the goal that should be kept in mind – the point of TV Marti, after all, was not to create a television station – it was to increase communication with the Cuban people.

Other means of communication can easily succeed where TV Marti has failed. Some may involve government spending, but at a time when communications are increasingly being driven by citizens, not government or media institutions – witness the wave of communication coming from audio, video, and text via cell phones in the streets of Tehran in recent days – it is more likely that the Congress can do far more to increase communication with Cuba by taking away restrictions on American liberties than by taking our tax dollars to spend on government programs.

“Civilized people everywhere have a stake in keeping contacts, communication, and creativity as broad, deep, and free as possible,” President Reagan said in 1984 at a conference promoting exchanges with the Soviet Union. He had no illusions about the Soviet government: “The Soviet insistence on sealing their people off and on filtering and controlling contacts and the flow of information remains the central problem.” But his prescription was clear, and we would do well to follow it today with regard to Cuba: “The way governments can best promote contacts among people is by not standing in the way.”

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Mr. Peters. And next we will go to Professor Nichols.

STATEMENT OF JOHN NICHOLS, PH.D., PROFESSOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

There are a lot of things in the world that I know absolutely nothing or little about. TV Marti is not one of them. I have been researching and writing about TV Marti since before its beginning, and I was very active in the debate two decades ago on the authorization of TV Marti. I know it is immodest of me to say, I hate to be the type of guy to say I told you so, but I simply could not resist.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Tell us anyhow, Professor.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you. I couldn't resist attaching my 1988 testimony to another subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee in which I argued against the authorization of TV Marti.

My reasons back then were, first, that the physical properties of long distance television broadcasting, particularly the properties of TV Marti, were not conducive to delivering a usable signal across the Straits of Florida into Cuba without the cooperation of the Cuban Government.

Second, as a result of the first, that there would be little or no audience in Cuba as a result of those physical limitations.

Third, I argued that in an effort to achieve this goal, that the United States would have to resort to methods that almost certainly would place it in contradiction with its international treaty obligations; namely, the International Telecommunications Convention, and United States is a signatory to that convention and we rely heavily in other areas for the operation of our domestic broadcasting system, the protection of our domestic broadcasting system depends on that very treaty.

And finally, I argued that everything that TV Marti was proposing that they could do could be done through other methods

that would have no or little cost to the taxpayers, would not place us in violation of our international treaty obligations, and wouldn't have all the side effects on our foreign policy interests.

Twenty years, or 20-plus years later since my 1988 testimony, I think those predictions hold up pretty well.

TV Marti's quest to overcome the laws of physics has been a flop. Aero Marti, the airborne platform for TV Marti, has no audience currently in Cuba, and it is a complete and total waste of \$6 million a year in taxpayer dollars. The audience of TV Marti, particularly the Aero Marti platform, is probably zero. And I am troubled by the fact that the International Telecommunications Union, going back to 1990, has repeatedly notified the U.S. Government that we are not in compliance with our treaty obligations and that the United States must take corrective action to bring ourselves back into compliance. We have not responded to those directives from the ITU.

TV Marti's response to this succession of failures over a two-decade period has been to resort to ever more expensive technological gimmicks, all richly funded by Congress, and none of those gimmicks, such as the airplane, work or probably can work without the compliance of the Cuban Government. It is just the laws of physics.

In short, TV Marti is a highly wasteful and ineffective operation.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I do want to emphasize that I strongly feel that there are ways in which the U.S. Government can and should improve its communication with the Cuban people, and to foster democracy on the island, and to try to help to improve the lives of the Cuban people. But TV Marti is not one of them. Mr. Chairman, TV Marti is an embarrassing and expensive failure. It seriously undermines our own U.S. best interests. Therefore, I encourage the Congress to close the station and open real opportunities for improved communication with the Cuban people.

Thank you again. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nichols follows:]

**TV MARTI HAS VIRTUALLY NO AUDIENCE, VIOLATES
INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND SHOULD BE CLOSED**

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN S. NICHOLS

Professor of Communications and International Affairs
College of Communications
The Pennsylvania State University

Before the Subcommittee on International Organizations,
Human Rights and Oversight
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives

Hearings on "TV Marti: A Station in Search of an Audience?"

June 17, 2009

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Television Marti has virtually no audience in Cuba and has little relevance in the Cuban domestic dialogue about the historic political transition currently taking place there. Although estimates vary, the total expenditures – including both direct federal appropriations and the substantial indirect costs -- to operate TV Marti since it went on the air in 1990 probably exceed a half-billion dollars of taxpayer money. Further, TV Marti has huge non-financial costs to the United States. The station currently is operating in violation of our international treaty obligations and is seriously undermining our foreign policy interests.

Therefore, in a time of financial hardship and sagging international reputation for the United States, to continue spending tens of millions of dollars per year on broadcasts that are ineffective, wasteful, and tarnish the U.S. image abroad is throwing good money after bad. Congress and the new Administration should close TV Marti at the earliest opportunity.

My conclusions are based on more than 30 years of research on Cuban communications issues, during which I was active in the longstanding congressional debate about TV Marti. I have taken the liberty of attaching my 1988 testimony to another subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee, in which I argued against the authorization of TV Marti because it probably would not be seen on the island,

would operate outside the bounds of international broadcast regulations, would compromise U.S. national self interest, and would accomplish nothing that could not be achieved more cheaply through other, less-confrontational means. Those predictions hold up pretty well in 2009.

In the summer of 2007, after the airborne version of TV Marti (dubbed AeroMarti) became operational, I had the opportunity to conduct extensive follow-up research in Cuba regarding the effectiveness of the plane and the whole range of communications issues related to Radio and TV Marti. The trip was arranged and funded by the Cuba Program of the Center of International Policy, and I was joined by the program's director, Dr. Wayne S. Smith, a leading expert on Cuba who formerly was director of Cuba Affairs in the Department of State and chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, and his assistant, Jennifer Schuett.

I was given wide access to top Cuban officials and leading communications experts, including Ricardo Alarcon, President of the National Assembly; Josefina Vidal, Director of the North American section of the Ministry of Foreign Relations; Carlos Martínez Albuerne, Director General, Control and Supervision Agency, Ministry of Informatics and Communications; Luis Acosta Echeverría, First Vice President of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television (ICRT); Fabio Fernández, Director of Social Research for ICRT; and Arnaldo Coro Antich, academic, journalist, and leading Cuban expert on electronic communications. And the Cuban officials supplied me with substantial documentary evidence in support of their positions on these questions.

AUDIENCE OF TV MARTI

To answer the central question of the subcommittee (Does TV Marti have an audience on the island?), it is probably best to first tackle two sub-questions: Can TV Marti be seen in Cuba? And, to the extent that it can be seen, do people in Cuba choose to watch it?

The answer to the first sub-question is: the broadcast version of TV Marti is *not* seen in populated areas of Cuba and, almost without exception, has not been seen since the station went on the air in 1990. Despite the many expensive technological gimmicks funded by Congress, such moving from VHF to UHF broadcasts and changing the transmitter platform from an aerostat to an airplane, the basic physical properties of television broadcasting prevent TV Marti from delivering a signal to the island that is sufficiently strong to compete with Cuban counter-broadcasts and that can be seen by any significant number of people there.

The reason is that television is a short-distance, line-of-sight form of broadcasting. While putting the transmitter in an aerostat or airplane extends the potential distance that a TV signal can cover, the transmitter must have considerable power to push its complex and data-heavy signal over even short distances under ideal circumstances. The typical coverage area for a broadcast television station is roughly 50 miles, but the distance between the TV Marti transmitter and potential audiences in Cuba is double or triple that. Every time the distance that a TV signal must travel

doubles, the transmitter power must be quadrupled. But AeroMarti – TV Marti's airborne transmitter -- carries a relatively small payload and, therefore, presumably has a transmitter that produces only a fraction of the power of a regular terrestrial TV transmitter. Consequently, the TV Marti signal is very weak after it traverses the Strait of Florida and reaches the Cuban coastline. All the Cuban government needs to do is fill the same channel with its own, low-power signal – which it has the legal right to do under international law – and the TV Marti signal is disrupted and cannot be seen in the surrounding area. As a rule of thumb, the TV Marti must be hundreds of times stronger at the point of reception than the Cuban counter-broadcasts simply to be seen. Given the power needs and distance limits, that is a level that TV Marti is incapable of reaching.

Therefore, unless TV Marti figures out a way to overcome the laws of physics (which I seriously doubt), its broadcasts cannot be seen on the island without the compliance of the Cuban government – no matter how many more expensive technologies the U.S. government invests in.

In sharp contrast, the transmissions of the two satellite services that simultaneously carry TV Marti programming can be seen in Cuba. The coverage area of the Hispasat satellite blankets the entire island, and Direct TV local spot beam reaches the North Central portion of the country with a high-grade signal. In addition, there are an unknown – but probably significant – number of satellite dishes in use in Cuba. As a result, TV Marti – along with scores of other television programming options – is easily available to those who are connected to these bootleg satellite reception networks. Although it is much easier to jam a satellite circuit than an over-the-air broadcast signal, to do the former would be a serious violation of international telecommunication regulations and, as a result, Cuba has not hindered the satellite transmission of TV Marti.

That leads to the second sub-question: Of those Cubans who can view U.S. programming via an illegal satellite dish connection, how many choose TV Marti over the wealth of programming options, including Spanish-language content from Miami commercial stations and other countries in the region? While it is nearly impossible to precisely quantify the number, the answer to the question is that the audience of the satellite version of TV Marti is very small. Surveys by both the U.S. and Cuban governments, in-country reporting by foreign journalists, and anecdotal evidence all indicate that the overwhelming majority of Cubans with access to satellite dish television strongly prefer other -- primarily entertainment -- programming. My Cuban friends, for example, regularly watch House and CSI-Miami. While most of them are intellectuals and clearly not representative of the larger Cuban population -- and regardless of their private opinions about the Cuban government -- they insist that TV Marti simply is not part of the larger political discourse and, consequently, is not relevant to the future of their country.

Therefore, the answer to the subcommittee's central question in this hearing is that the audience for TV Marti in Cuba is extremely small. Virtually no one can see the broadcasts from AeroMarti, and Congress' continued investment in that technology is a

complete and total waste of taxpayer dollars. The satellite transmissions of TV Marti, which cost only a small fraction of the roughly \$6 million per year to broadcast from AeroMarti, are marginally more cost efficient but still garner only tiny audiences. By any reasonably cost-benefit analysis, TV Marti is extremely wasteful and should be closed.

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION REGULATIONS

The U.S. government is in knowing and willful violation of its international treaty obligations by continuing to broadcast via AeroMarti, the airborne transmitter of TV Marti. Shortly after TV Marti went on the air in 1990, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations body responsible for implementing international broadcasting treaties and coordinating the use of the airwaves, notified the United States that TV Marti was not in compliance with provisions of the International Telecommunication Convention – to which both Cuba and the United States are signatories – and directed the United States to take corrective action. The United States obviously has not complied, and in the intervening years, the ITU has frequently repeated its determination to no avail.

The regulatory basis for the ITU's decision is detailed in my attached 1988 testimony and will not be repeated here; however, it is important to underline that the international telecommunication regulations in question – while arcane – are extremely important to U.S. interests. The very provisions that TV Marti flouts were adopted as international law in the late 1940s at the insistence of the United States – and over the stiff opposition of the Soviet Union – because they not only ensure the most efficient use of the international airwaves for the benefit of all countries but also are critical in protecting the U.S. domestic broadcast system from external interference. To violate such regulations is obviously counter-productive.

The responses of the U.S. government to the ITU's determination regarding TV Marti have ranged from silence to hostile rebukes of the UN agency. This is particularly unfortunate because the United States was the primary architect of the international framework that we rely on to tackle the many grave problems (such as human rights violations, nuclear proliferation, climate change and – in this case – misuse and degradation of the broadcast spectrum) that span borders and cannot be resolved by individual nations. The United States advocated an international legal system because it was the right thing to do and, at the same time, was in our national best interests. But, in recent years, Washington has grown contemptuous of this multi-lateral approach to solving collective problems and too often has selectively complied with only those treaty obligations that satisfy its short-term political needs.

President Obama campaigned on the promise that his administration would re-engage the United States in the world community and rebuild respect for the rule of law and international organizations. While TV Marti's disregard for international telecommunication regulations is nothing on the order of violations of -- for example -- the Geneva Conventions against torture, it is symptomatic of the same double standard by which the United States sets rules for the rest of the world and then breaks them. Such actions have serious long-term consequences. If the United States wants others

-- such as the government of Cuba -- to obey international law, it must do so itself. (See Jorge I. Dominguez, "Unrepentant Power," Foreign Policy, January/February 2008, pp. 71-72, for an excellent explication of this point. Dominguez, vice provost for international affairs at Harvard University, is a distinguished scholar of Cuban affairs.)

Furthermore, it is at least ironic that, while TV Marti is supposedly about freedom of information for the Cuban people, the U.S. government has not been forthcoming in releasing information to the U.S. public about its operation of the station. I have filed numerous Freedom of Information Act requests for relevant unclassified documents, but almost all of those requests have been ignored or inappropriately denied. It is equally ironic that most of the three-way correspondence among the United States, Cuba, and the International Telecommunication Union was supplied to me by Cuban officials. (I wish to acknowledge in particular the cooperation of Carlos Martinez Albuerne, the director of the Cuban counterpart to the Federal Communications Commission, for releasing considerable documentary evidence to me. I also wish to thank Erika Polson, a soon-to-be graduate of Penn State's mass communications Ph.D. program who assisted me in my most-recent wave of failed FOIA requests to various federal agencies.) Dr. Benjamin Cramer, a recent Penn State Ph.D. specializing in communications law, and I currently are culling the documents released by the Cubans and using them to update my 1988 testimony. We would be pleased to share that more detailed legal analysis with the subcommittee when it is completed.

Conversely, I would like to applaud the Chairman for requesting the GAO report that is the focus of today's hearing. In my opinion, it is the best and most complete government study on TV Marti to be released to the public, and it has added greatly to the public dialogue on the topic.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that everything TV Marti claims to accomplish (or would if it was viewed in Cuba) can be easily achieved by other means that cost far less -- in many cases, nothing -- to the U.S. taxpayer; do not violate international law; and do not unnecessarily complicate U.S. foreign policy interests. For example, if Congress is serious about improving communication with Cuba, it would pass HR 874 (Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act) and restore the right of U.S. citizens to travel freely to the island and engage a meaningful and productive dialogue with the Cuban people. In addition, the recent announcement by the White House that it intends to authorize U.S. companies to expand modern telecommunication links with Cuba -- seriously impeded by the U.S. embargo -- is an important step in the right direction.

In other words, there is nothing to lose by closing TV Marti and much to gain. The station is not needed -- indeed, it is counterproductive -- to expanding communication with and fostering democracy for the Cuban people.

Mr. Chairman, TV Marti is an embarrassing and expensive failure that undermines important domestic and international interests of the United States. Consequently, Congress should pull the plug on the station as soon as possible and open up real opportunities for effective communication with the Cuban people. Thank you.

**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PREVIOUS TESTIMONY BY JOHN S. NICHOLS
REGARDING TV MARTI AND OTHER CUBAN BROADCASTING ISSUES**

- U.S.-Cuba Propaganda Wars: The Case of Television Marti. Chapter in International Communication: Concepts and Cases. Edited by Kwadwo Anokwa, Carolyn Lin and Michael B. Salwen. Wadsworth, Belmont, CA (2002).
- John Spicer Nichols and Alicia M. Torres, Cuba. Chapter 2 in Telecommunications in Latin America, pp. 17-35. Edited by Eli M. Noam. Oxford University Press, New York (1998).
- Institutionalization of Anti-Castro Radio Broadcasting. Chapter 8 in Messages from the Underground: Transnational Radio in Resistance and in Solidarity, pp. 103-115. Edited by Nancy L. Street and Marilyn M. Matelski. Praeger, New York (1997).
- Effects of International Propaganda on U.S. - Cuban Relations. Chapter 5 in Communications in Latin America: Journalism, Mass Media, and Society, pp. 77-103. Edited by Richard R. Cole. Scholarly Resources, Willmington, DE (1996).
- Testimony of John S. Nichols, The Audience for U.S. Government International Broadcasting. Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Operations, U.S. House of Representatives, 102nd Cong., 2nd Sess. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC (1993).
- Summary and Analysis of Meetings with Cuban Broadcasters and Officials in Havana, December 18-23, 1989. In Trip Report to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, U.S. House of Representatives (1990).
- Testimony of John S. Nichols, Foreign Policy Implications of TV Marti. Hearings before the Subcommittees on Western Hemisphere Affairs and International Operations, U.S. House of Representatives, 100th Cong., 2nd Sess. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC (1988).
- The U.S. View of Radio Interference. Chapter 8 in Subject to Solution: Problems in Cuban - U.S. Relations, pp. 124-137 & 145-155. Edited by Wayne S. Smith and Esteban Morales Dominguez. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder (1988). (Choice "Outstanding Academic Book.")
- A Word of Caution about TV Marti. Broadcasting. 115 (4):24 (July 25, 1988.)
- Lawrence C. Soley and John S. Nichols, Clandestine Radio Broadcasting. Praeger, New York (1987). (Choice, "Outstanding Academic Book.")

- Radio Marti: an electronic Bay of Pigs. Broadcasting. 108 (21): 22-24 (May 27, 1985).
- A Communication Perspective on Radio Marti. Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos, 14(2): 35-46 (1984). Rejoinder: 55-56.
- When Nobody Listens: Assessing the Political Success of Radio Marti. Communication Research, 11(2): 281-304 (1984).
- Testimony of John S. Nichols, Radio Broadcasting to Cuba. Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 97th Cong., 2nd Sess. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC (1983).
- Cuba. Chapter in World Press Encyclopedia, pp. 257-271. Edited by George Kurian. Facts on File, New York (1982). Excerpted in The Cuban Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society. Edited by Philip Brenner, et.al. Grove Press, New York (1989).
- Testimony of John S. Nichols, Department of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1983. Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, 97th Cong., 2nd Sess., U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC (1982)
- Testimony of John S. Nichols, Radio Broadcasting to Cuba. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Consumer Protection and Finance. U.S. House of Representatives, 97th Cong., 2nd Sess. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC (1982).
- Cuban Mass Media: Organization, Control and Functions. No. 78 in Journalism Monographs. Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, Lexington, KY (1982).

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you very much, Professor.

Mr. Shamble, I indicated earlier that I had read your testimony and I found it thought-provoking. I know there has been a lot of speculation about the consequences to employees. Clearly, that is understandable.

Let me tell you where I am coming from right now so you get an idea. I don't know how long we are going to be able to be here. But this plane that is costing us \$6 million—and I did read Professor Nichols' testimony as well, as well as all of your testimony—it just doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

It isn't increasing, you know, the audience. The invisible audience is not being increased by the expenditure of \$6 million. In addition to that, the permanent employees in the Marti operations, I have met a number of them, they appear to be professional and dedicated. But I have to tell you, I have had enough of the contractors. Because as I review these contracts, they arouse in me a suspicion that they can be awarded based upon political patronage. That does not, I think, enhance the Marti operations as a whole.

So at this point in time, understanding that change occurs incrementally, and that it is slow, a step-by-step process, in my mind would be to let's get the plane back on the ground and let's end the contracting, which in other reports has been extremely problematic.

I can only think of the one with a radio station that is also jammed, receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars from the U.S. Government, and then running ads that I am sure the Cubans found interesting if they wanted to join the National Guard here in the United States. But I presume they have their own military that they are drafted into.

And, of course, if you have a problem with estate planning, I doubt that that is a subject that the Cuban people or even members of the Cuban Government would be concerned about, as their tax laws presumably are far different than ours. But in any event, go ahead, Mr. Shamble.

**STATEMENT OF MR. TIM SHAMBLE, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN
FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 1812**

Mr. SHAMBLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today on broadcasting efforts by the OCB. And I want to touch on employee concerns as well.

I am going to summarize my statement, because I know we have limited time. TV Marti transmission has been a problem since the beginning. The signal has been jammed. Numerous efforts have been made to get the signal into the island, the latest being AeroMarti. And as we heard, it costs anywhere between \$5 million and \$6 million a year, and it has not been effective by all accounts.

That being said, audience measures have to be looked at dubiously. As we have heard, Cuba is a totalitarian regime, and taking telephone surveys of people in Cuba and expecting them to answer honestly about listening to or watching stations that are not promoted by the Cuban Government is really not realistic. Does audience size matter anyway for government broadcasters?

You want to get as large an audience as possible, but you are restricted in the programming that you present. So a commercial broadcast, of course, needs a large audience. The bottom line is they sell airtime. They can charge more for their airtime the larger the audience is.

But for government broadcasters, we have a mission for Marti, TV Marti. It is the VOA charter and the enacting legislation. And that limits any kind of audience you are going to get. You are never going to get a ratings winner broadcasting a program on explanation of American foreign policy, although it is important and the number of people you do reach is critical, but it is not going to be a huge ratings winner.

All that being said, there has been a lot of discussion today about closing down TV Marti because the signal is jammed, there is no reliable data on anybody seeing the station. But we are in a new media climate now. Terrestrial TV broadcasting is not the only way to get a video product to the viewer. And TV Marti should be viewed as a video provider, not just a television station. You can use the Internet to get a video product to the viewer. You can use cell phones now. You can use other hand-held devices such as iPods. And this is what TV Marti should concentrate on. Terrestrial TV has always been a problem, but we have different alternatives now than we did back in 1990. And I think that is what TV Marti, OCB, and the BBG should be looking at, looking at these other alternatives. There is a—

Mr. DELAHUNT. Let me interrupt you, Mr. Shamble.

Mr. SHAMBLE. Go ahead.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And I want others to consider these questions. You know, if we grounded the plane and relied on satellite or other technologies and maintained the personnel, would that cause the morale, the employee problems that you allude to, to fester or to improve? Give me some feedback.

Mr. SHAMBLE. It would certainly improve their morale now. The proposal in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget from the BBG was to change the programming from long-form newscasts and information shows to 5-minute news briefs, and then eliminate between 30–40 full-time employees.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Was there a study done on this by management?

Mr. SHAMBLE. Not that I know of.

Mr. DELAHUNT. So this just came out of the air like AeroMarti?

Mr. SHAMBLE. As far as we know, yes. And the problem with that proposal is it doesn't address the problem. The real problem with TV Marti is the signal, the transmission. It is not the programming.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Right. I guess what I am saying to you is, you don't, you know, presume that you support the concept, okay, of transmission of—

Mr. SHAMBLE. The terrestrial TV.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Right.

Mr. SHAMBLE. Right.

Mr. DELAHUNT. You don't gain anything with this. You can take that money and use it to support other initiatives, you know, whether it be satellite and other initiatives, and you lose nothing, and yet you effect a savings of \$5 million or \$6 million.

Mr. SHAMBLE. By getting rid of—

Mr. DELAHUNT. By getting rid of the plane.

Mr. SHAMBLE. Yes, you would.

Mr. DELAHUNT. That is what I want to know. I would like you to do a survey of employees at OCB and, you know, give us some feedback. You know, I am inclined to support the position of Mr. Nichols and Mr. Peters, but yet at the same time, you know, there is a human element here. And I know people are—I know we are all facing a difficult patch. And I am sure that the talents of those that are currently there can be maximized.

You could help me save some money because this is, from my way of thinking, an absolute waste of American taxpayer dollars. I like the ideas put forth by Mr. Peters in terms of being creative. You know, it is time for a change. Times they are a' changing, like Dylan said. And I look toward you, as the representative of the employees.

And I also like the idea about a Voice of America, Latin American edition. I don't want you to go into it, but let's not just focus on Cuba. American Latin American policy has been held hostage by a bilateral relationship that should change and that many of us here in Congress are working to change. But if you can, just conclude by addressing the issue of employee morale, because that gives me some feedback in terms of management issues.

Mr. SHAMBLE. Well, the issues with employee morale, the main issues I deal with are the overabundance of contractors. And that is not just in OCB, by the way, it is throughout the BBG. It is with VOA as well. And we have reported these issues before. We believe that they are hiring contractors, using them as employees, which is a violation of the contracting rules and regulations. If Congress would take a look at the contracting issues, I think that would really improve morale.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I tell you what I find really disturbing is in your testimony you say there is a real fear of retaliation in the Office of Cuba Broadcasting and throughout BBG itself, so employees are reluctant to do anything more than report the charges. In the last three Office of Personnel Management surveys, the BBG has been at or near the bottom of all government agencies who took part. The last survey showed the BBG at the very bottom for questions such as—and I am using your words: I can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule, or regulation without fear of reprisal.

Employees answered in the negative almost twice as often as the government-wide average. I mean it is not surprising that the GAO report of 2009, some of the allegations were investigated, but people appeared to be concerned about their livelihood. That must stop. If morale is at that particular level, that is just—put aside the issue of the Marti operations, put aside that, put aside the issue of, you know, our policy vis-à-vis Cuba. That is unhealthy, and I want to know about it because this particular committee has jurisdiction not just over the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, but the BBG itself. And if that continues in terms of a trend, it tells me that we have a dysfunctional operation on our hands.

I am going to cut you off because I want to go first to our Republican, then I am going to go to Ms. Richardson, then I will end up

with that fighter of pork who comes from the State of Missouri, the vice chairman of the committee.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Shamble follows:]

**THE HEARING OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, HUMAN
RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT
JUNE 17, 2009**

“TV MARTI: A STATION IN SEARCH OF AN AUDIENCE”

**STATEMENT OF TIM SHAMBLE
PRESIDENT OF AFGE LOCAL 1812**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Tim Shamble. As President of the American Federation of Government Employees, Local 1812, the exclusive representative of the bargaining unit employees at the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, I have been asked to testify about the broadcasting efforts of TV Marti. I would also like to address employee concerns at the OCB as well.

TV Marti Transmission

Since its inception, TV Marti has been under fire from the Cuban government and from critics both inside and outside of Congress. The primary problem with TV Marti has been the difficulty of transmitting a signal into the island. The Cuban government has reportedly successfully jammed the signal since TV Marti first went on the air. Many attempts have been made to defeat the jamming but according to the best research available, all have met with little or no success. As an employee of OCB from 1991 until 1996, I was sometimes required to staff what was known as Central Control. Occasionally we were asked to make copies of recordings of TV Marti that we were told were recorded in Cuba. The recordings would start with the appearance of the TV Logo and then within a few seconds the tape would dissolve into snow. It was apparent that the signal was being jammed. Attempts have been made to defeat the jamming of the signal with the latest experiment being the Aero Marti project in which airplanes are used in an attempt to transmit a television signal into the island primarily around the Havana area. According to a recent GAO report of January 2009 (GAO-09-127) the Aero Marti project has not significantly increased the audience in Cuba. The Aero Marti method of transmission is by far the most costly method of transmitting a television signal into Cuba with a yearly expense of approximately \$5 million.

Audience Measures

Estimates of audience numbers in Cuba should be viewed skeptically. People living under totalitarian regimes would be very reluctant to admit viewing a television station that they know is frowned upon by their government. Research that relies on telephone calls to Cubans in Cuba should not be given a great deal of weight, as the people contacted have no way of verifying who the call is actually coming from and should be expected to be very cautious in how they answer any questions possibly fearing that it is actually the government making the calls. Even though any measure of a Cuban audience should be viewed skeptically, there is little doubt that TV Marti's signal is not reaching a very large audience.

Does Audience Size Matter

In the private sector, audience size is almost all that counts. The larger the audience the more a station can impact the bottom line. Private broadcasters are in the business of making money. The larger the audience the more the broadcaster can charge for commercials and the more money a station can make. Thus broadcasts are aimed at attracting as large an audience as possible and this regularly translates into a product that is aimed at the lowest common denominator. Commercial broadcasters have few restrictions on what they broadcast. Therefore, commercial broadcasters should not be considered as competitors of U.S. government broadcasters. If audience size is the measure of the competition, it is an unfair contest. A show explaining U.S. foreign policy cannot compete with a show such as *Baywatch*.

Government broadcasting is different. There is a mission and the broadcasts must adhere to that mission. In the case of TV Marti, the broadcasts must comply with the VOA Charter which requires that they be a reliable source of news that is accurate, objective, and comprehensive. The broadcasts must represent a wide spectrum of American society and explain the policies of the United States. This is not a formula for a ratings winner. The goal for government broadcasts should be to attract as large an audience as possible while still following the mission of the Agency. The hope is that those interested enough to seek out such programming would have the opportunity to view it and that these individuals, although not great in numbers, are those who can influence events and effect desired change.

So even if the jamming of TV Marti can be overcome and audience research could be done more accurately in Cuba, there should not be an expectation of huge audience numbers. If a greatest number of viewers possible were the goal, we could rely on commercial broadcasters and they would no doubt provide the Cuban population with reality television. The goal, however, of these government broadcasts is to reach as large an audience as possible while providing an explanation of American policies, ideals and unbiased news, programming that a commercial broadcaster is not likely to carry.

Throwing the Baby Out with the Bath Water

Because TV Marti has not been very successful at defeating the jamming of the Cuban government there are those who would like to close it down entirely. This would be a mistake. We now live in a multimedia environment and radio broadcasts alone are not enough to satisfy an audience, particularly the youth. TV Marti should be thought of as a broadcaster that provides the video component of the OCB. The challenge is in how to deliver that product to the viewer. There are more options now than there were in 1990 when TV Marti began and terrestrial television transmission is not the only one.

Regular terrestrial television transmission was never a very good option for TV Marti. This type of transmission is like FM radio signals. It is line of sight transmission with obstacles between the transmitter and receiver a cause for interruption of the signal. There is a limitation of about 120 miles of effective range. The signal is also easily jammed. The Aerostat blimp and the current Aero Marti methods are variations on this

type of transmission and they have not proven to be that effective. They also cost a great deal.

Satellite TV is a better option. For starters it is less expensive. There are limitations in that the cost of satellite dishes for the user may be prohibitive especially in poorer countries such as Cuba, and the fact that satellite dishes are highly visible and can be made illegal in repressive regimes. The choices are many as there are normally hundreds of channels to choose from. However, it is hard to arrest everyone with a satellite dish and a small audience can be expected to be reached through satellite TV.

Video products can also be delivered via the Internet. This option has its drawbacks as has been demonstrated inside China and more recently in Iran. The gatekeeper can effectively block access to websites and in totalitarian regimes the gatekeeper is more often than not the government. But some have found ways to get around the gatekeepers and the Internet is an option that should be used.

Other alternatives include reaching viewers via cell phones and other hand held devices such as iPods. Surveys have shown that today's youth are more inclined to get their news and information through these new delivery methods as opposed to television broadcasts. The bottom line is that TV Marti does not have to broadcast via regular terrestrial television methods to be effective.

Another option to consider is a single 24/7 TV broadcast product for satellite distribution in conjunction with the Voice of America LatAm Division. The employees of TV Marti are not only knowledgeable about Cuba but of Latin American affairs as well. The BBG has largely ignored the importance of broadcasting to Central and South America. A combined effort could combat the current influence Cuba has over Latin American affairs. A portion of the broadcast cycle could be devoted to Cuba and perhaps Venezuela, a country that has been rapidly following the path of Cuban politics and repression. Other Latin American issues could be addressed during other hours of broadcast. TV Marti would then have the opportunity of reaching Cuban citizens outside of Cuba. It would also help strengthen U.S. broadcasts to a region of the world, such as Venezuela.

Changing the Video Product

A proposal has been made in the FY 2010 budget process to eliminate the long form news and information product of TV Marti and produce only five minute news briefs with a very limited staff. This format violates the Congressional mandate for "accurate, objective, and comprehensive news." The explanation for this proposal by the current OCB administration is to help increase audience size. This is disingenuous at best. A change in programming will not impact audience size because it does not address the main problem. The major obstacle to increasing TV Marti's audience is not the programming, but the transmission. The Cuban audience deserves more than five minutes of news headlines, which is an ineffective method of providing comprehensive information using U.S. taxpayers' dollars; especially at a time when the Cuban

government has expanded their newscasts to three per day at the same hours TV Marti currently broadcasts its newscasts.

A better option would be to keep the long form news and information programming, eliminate terrestrial television broadcasting and use the savings to invest in newer technologies to deliver the video produced. The employees of TV Marti are dedicated and highly skilled federal workers with many combined years of broadcasting experience and who come to the Agency with a sense of mission. There is still a need to meet that mission. In the future there may come a time when regular television transmissions into the island may be a viable option. It would be better to have these employees available and in place than to try to suddenly ramp up a broadcast team.

Problems with Employee Morale

Finally, I would like to say a few words about employee morale at OCB. The morale problem has been characterized more than once as a problem of "communication". It is a much deeper problem than that. For years AFGE Local 1812 has received complaints of unqualified individuals being hired either as contractors or into the federal service. Reports of cronyism and nepotism have been frequent. Although some of these accusations have been reported through proper channels there is a real fear of retaliation in OCB and throughout the BBG itself so employees are reluctant to do anything more than report the charges. In the last three OPM Human Capital Resources surveys the BBG has been at or near the bottom of all government agencies who took part. The latest survey showed the BBG at the very bottom. For questions such as "I can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear of reprisal" employees of the BBG answered in the negative almost twice as often as the government wide average. Therefore it is not surprising that in the GAO report of January 2009 some of the allegations were investigated but little solid evidence was uncovered. One of the main problems is the overuse of contractors. Often, contractors have been given reporting assignments while fully capable federal employees have sat idly by because supervisors have refused to assign them the work. This is an example of government waste. Significant cost savings could be realized by a thinning of the ranks of contractors at the OCB.

AFGE Local 1812 has reported what we believe are violations of the contracting regulations in the BBG's use of contractors. We believe that the BBG is in many cases treating contractors as federal employees. We filed a petition to the FLRA who ruled against the Union's claim without holding a hearing and without speaking with any of the contractors. We believe that a serious look at the use of contractors within the OCB and the BBG will reveal violations of contracting rules and regulations.

That completes my statement and I will be happy to answer any questions you or any of the Subcommittee members may have.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Let's begin with Mr. Flake from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks for your indulgence in allowing me to sit in and ask questions.

Mr. Nichols perhaps, you mentioned a lot of the technical difficulties. And we know that those are steep. But when I have been in Cuba, I have sometimes asked those that we have met with if they listened to Radio Marti, which a lot of the technical issues don't apply. They can receive it. And the response has been pretty uniform. They say yes, we can, but why should we? It is a question of programming. They just don't get enough new news to make it worthwhile.

And so flipping back to TV Marti, if we were able to overcome the technical issues, in your view—and I would like Mr. Peters or perhaps anyone else, to speculate on whether or not we would face other issues—is the programming just so out of touch with Radio Marti? I have to tell you the comments were often, you know, yeah, we know Castro is a bad guy. We have heard it. We live it. Believe me, we don't need to be told that anymore. We would like some actual news. And there was too little of it, there was too much editorializing.

And I know that some of those problems still exist, but I would like to have your perspective.

Mr. NICHOLS. I absolutely agree with the thrust of your question, but we don't need to speculate, I think we know. The example would be that TV Marti is also carried by satellite, which is not disrupted. The signal can be sent and is received. And as you know, there is an unknown but probably significant number of satellite dishes that can receive that. But what happens, people have scores and scores of programming choices, and they choose not to watch TV Marti, but, rather, to view other programming, Spanish language programming from Miami or from other countries.

So I think we already know. The answer to the question is the Cubans would prefer, even if they are opposed to the Castro government, even if they have serious issues with what is happening in Cuba, it does not automatically translate that they are going to watch TV Marti. They are going to look for more credible sources of information and entertainment.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Peters, you want to comment on that?

Mr. PETERS. I don't envy the management of Radio Marti, because I think they are broadcasting into a very competitive media environment. Now, that may sound like an odd statement, but the fact is that in Cuba the state media have a variety of programming. They have *Grey's Anatomy* and they have got the *Sopranos* on TV. For decades they have had American movies on.

Mr. DELAHUNT. How about "American Idol"? Have they found that yet?

Mr. PETERS. I don't think so. Movies on Saturday night. They have got great music programming. They have got programming about all kinds of things that people are interested in. Of course, there is an ideological component to it. But there is that, and then a lot of Cubans have short-wave radios, and so they can listen to broadcasts that come from here, but they can listen to Spain's international broadcasting, to the BBC Spanish Service, and so it

is not an easy challenge. Plus a large part of the charge of Radio Marti is politics. And a lot of Cubans are not interested in politics.

So Mr. Shamble is pointing out something that I think is very apt, which is that the limit, you know, there may be a top limit on the potential audience share of the Radio Marti that is in fact quite low. I think that speaking of what you referred to, Congressman Flake, just in January of this year, Vladimir Roca, one of the dissident leaders in Cuba, said that the Radio Marti programming "is so bad and so uninteresting to the Cuban people that no one listens." And also in January of this year, he said that 80 percent of the station's programming is about the local agenda in Miami.

I think that the challenge for Radio Marti is to be straight, to avoid the problems that have persisted for many years of bias and selectivity, which turns the Cuban audience off, and to reach the quality standards that make so many Cubans, when they have a short-wave radio and turn it on, listen to some broadcast other than from the United States.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Ford, do you have any comments? I know you addressed a lot of the technical issues.

Mr. FORD. Yeah, we reviewed a lot of the surveys and program reviews that are conducted by the International Broadcasting Bureau. And this whole issue of bias that is introduced occasionally on broadcasts, lack of balance and credibility, we have seen going back to 2003 that that repeatedly comes up in the program review process. And OCB has not been able, apparently, to respond to recommendations over that whole period, 6-year period that would eliminate some of that bias. So that again, I think that is what we are hearing here, is a case of if you want to have more effective programming, we need to have a more professionalized operation. And we need to exclude all of these biases and lack of balance that have been reported through the review process. So I think that issue needs to be addressed.

Mr. FLAKE. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Ms. Richardson?

Ms. RICHARDSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask one brief question and then I will just make a very brief comment. Are any of you gentlemen aware of any other cases in the United States Government where we use aircraft to transmit broadcasts to countries without their permission?

Mr. PETERS. Outside of a wartime context where it is the U.S. military doing it, no.

Ms. RICHARDSON. Okay. Let me just very briefly say I see a lot of students in the audience, and I think it is important that they hear all perspectives and have an opportunity to learn.

I recently went to Cuba and met with President Raul Castro, former President Fidel Castro, and the President of the National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcon. When I hear comments of dictatorship of Cuba, I want to be clear. I can't speak to everything that has ever happened or currently is being done throughout all of the island of Cuba, but what I can say is I personally did not see police intervention of folks trying to interact with us and communicate with us. I didn't see a prohibiting of freedom of religion. There were a lot of things that I have heard that I actually did not see for myself.

What I would like to say is that when we went to the U.S. Intersection Office, I saw very consistent to what the concerns we are hearing today. I went to a building that serves essentially as an embassy. We are not allowed to have an embassy. And there was a sign, an 80-foot sign that went the entire distance of the building, that was spewing out this information. And I know of no other embassy in no other place where the United States—where we do this.

So what I would say is I want to compliment you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I want to compliment the witnesses who have been providing us other avenues of things to consider. Because I strongly agree, I don't think we should end communication, but number one, it should be cooperative. And we shouldn't be violating our own laws that we strive for if we are not doing it, abiding by the own laws that we talk about in this country.

So I would welcome the opportunity to learn more about how we could change the programming that would meet the approval of the government and our Government, and also considering, as you said, Mr. Chairman, maybe some other vehicles of how we might choose to communicate. But I applaud you taking on this issue, and look forward to working with you.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Ms. Richardson. I am confident that we would receive the permission of the Cuban Government if the Boston Red Sox baseball games were part of this effort. Because Red Sox Nation does extend beyond Boston, beyond the United States. It is an international phenomenon that I know would be welcomed in Cuba, as well as everywhere on the planet.

And with that, let me recognize the vice chair.

Mr. CARNAHAN. They might be welcome everywhere except St. Louis and the St. Louis Cardinals.

Thank you all for being here. And I guess I wanted to hit a couple of things real quickly before we have to go to votes.

First, I wanted to ask for the panel, the surveys of 1 percent or so people actually getting the programming, how accurate do you think that is in terms of people responding to a survey admitting that they are listening to this programming? And are there any reports about reprisals against people that are receiving this kind of programming or information?

Mr. FORD. Yeah, the surveys that we included in our report, the ones that we said were the best surveys because they are random surveys of individuals in Cuba who have telephones, of which, according to the IBB, approximately 17 percent of the households have listed telephone numbers, the contractor that does the surveys does a random sample of those phones throughout the entire country. They have been doing that type of a survey since 2003. They have done four of them. According to the information that they have reported, the issue of how comfortable was the respondent was included as part of the survey.

And from 2005 and subsequent, 2006 and 2008, the surveys indicated about 6 percent of the respondents were "fearful." The other 94 percent indicated that they were cooperative.

Now, we don't know much more than that. So we don't really know what the 6 percent means and we don't know what the 94 percent means. With regard to reprisals, at least in terms of the surveys, we didn't see any information indicating there were repris-

als. But that doesn't mean that there weren't some. We just didn't have that information available.

Mr. PETERS. Congressman, I have never heard of any reprisals against anyone who has seen TV Marti, because I have never known of someone who has seen TV Marti. With regard to survey research in Cuba, I think it is a difficult proposition. And the chairman mentioned some of the organizations that have tried. Everybody that tries deserves credit for it. I am willing to stipulate that the telephone surveys are problematic, and maybe that you just don't get a good result because it is a country where people are not used to taking surveys that way. So I am willing to stipulate, we can just push them off the table.

But, still, you are left with a TV station where you never hear anyone talking about anything that has been on the TV station, and where the dissidents, large numbers of them—Congressman Flake was just here. I was at a dinner with him in 2004 with a leading dissident. He asked her the question, “What about TV Marti?” She said, “You mean virtual TV Marti?”

That answer comes up time and again, that it is just not seen. If you indulge me just a moment, Mr. Chairman, because on the subject of survey research, Mr. Mack brought something up earlier about Cubans who now are in the United States and live in freedom and say in high numbers, 17–20 percent, that they saw TV Marti when they were there. Well, I think there are problems with those surveys, too.

I believe that if you look into the answer, what you will find is that these are surveys conducted by the Office of Cuba Broadcasting among recent arrivals, Cubans who have recently arrived. Now, these are Cubans who arrive, and they come to the United States, and they are living in hope that within a year they are going to get their permanent residency. And they have a package of government benefits that includes health care for a year, it includes employment assistance, it includes free English classes if they want to take classes to learn English at Miami Dade Community College. And that is where those surveys are taken.

And I believe if you check into this, you will see it is—speaking of contractors, an OCB contractor goes one evening to those English classes and goes to these folks, and they put on a buffet, and they pay them a little stipend, and they ask them—these are people from the government essentially—they ask them, well, did you ever see TV Marti? And, lo and behold, you got higher numbers in those surveys than anywhere ever with regard to TV Marti. You can draw your own conclusions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I have.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Speaking of contractors, that was my next line of questions that I know we are going to be very short on time for. With regard to the contracting of the AeroMarti, how many contractors are flying those planes now? Any estimate? Is this one guy in a plane flying around? Ten people? Do we have any idea?

Mr. FORD. I was going to say they have two planes. They interchangeably use them. I am not sure exactly how many people they have in the plane.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Who is the contractor?

Mr. FORD. Lockheed Martin.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Lockheed Martin?

Mr. CARNAHAN. And there is just a single contractor that does that?

Mr. FORD. I am not sure if they have a sub that actually flies the planes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I would like to have the sub identified for the committee.

Mr. CARNAHAN. That was my next question, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DELAHUNT. That was a good line of questioning.

Mr. CARNAHAN. And were these contractors selected on some kind of a competitive bid process?

Mr. NICHOLS. I believe it was sole source. I would have to check, and I will correct the record if I am wrong, but I believe it is sole source because the specifications for the plane, there is only one company—what is it—the G-1, whatever the nomenclature is.

Mr. CARNAHAN. If you could provide to the committee the information on the contractor and how—the competitive nature of the selection, and if there were any other companies involved, I think that would be instructive to the committee. And also in terms of the cost, I understand at some point previously this was done by government personnel and planes?

Mr. NICHOLS. Yes, sir. Actually, I know a little bit more about this than I normally would. The Pennsylvania Air National Guard has got a psychological operations unit. And the plane was called Commando Solo, and would fly from Harrisburg down to the Straits of Florida and transmit from down there. That was—

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is truly Mission Impossible, isn't it, Professor?

Mr. CARNAHAN. And just my last question: Are there any cost comparisons between what we were paying for that versus the private contractors now?

Mr. NICHOLS. You know, that is a very good question. I don't know the answer. But there has been mention of the costs of TV Marti. And those are appropriated costs as opposed to the indirect costs. And I don't believe that they include the substantial amount of money that the Navy spent on the blimp or that the Pennsylvania Air National Guard spent flying their entire weekends down to the Florida Keys.

Mr. CARNAHAN. I am going to yield back my time for us to run to the Capitol.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I thank the gentleman. I thank the panel. It has been instructive. And as I indicated, if people have some creative, thoughtful ideas, you know, I love the idea of scholarships and exchanges. And I think you really hit it on the head, Mr. Peters, when you talked about public diplomacy in the larger perspective. We can take this money, we can use it well, we can respect government employees, and we can accomplish much if, particularly as Ms. Richardson said, we have a collaborative and cooperative approach to the issue of people-to-people exchange.

With that, we are adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:48 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X



MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT

William D. Delahunt (D-MA), Chairman

June 10, 2009

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend the following OPEN hearing of the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight, to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building:

DATE: Wednesday, June 17, 2009
TIME: 3:00 p.m.
SUBJECT: TV Marti: A Station in Search of an Audience?

WITNESSES: **Panel I**
Mr. Jess Ford
Director, International Affairs and Trade Team
Government Accountability Office

Panel II
John Nichols, Ph.D
Professor of Communications and International Affairs
Penn State University

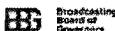
Mr. Philip Peters
Vice President
Lexington Institute

Mr. Tim Shamble
President
American Federation of Government Employees, Local 1812

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee as noted above.

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY JOHN NICHOLS, PH.D., PROFESSOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, PENN STATE UNIVERSITY



**D -- 8. 58 – Communications Equipment; NIACS 334220 – Radio &
Television Broadcasting and Wireless Communication Equip. Mfg.**

Solicitation Number: Reference-Number-MCON9030

Agency: Broadcasting Board of Governors

Office: Director, Office of Contracts

Location: Office of Contracts (MCON)

Notice Type:

Presolicitation

Posted Date:

December 23, 2005

Response Date:

January 23, 2006

Archiving Policy:

Automatic, on specified date

Archive Date:

February 7, 2006

Original Set Aside:

N/A

Set Aside:

N/A

Classification Code:

D -- Information technology services, including telecommunications services

NAICS Code:

334 -- Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing/334220 -- Radio and Television Broadcasting and
Wireless Communications Equipment Manufacturing

Solicitation Number:

Reference-Number-MCON9030

Notice Type:

Presolicitation

Synopsis:

Added: 2005-12-23 December 23, 2005

The Broadcasting Board of Governors/International Broadcasting Bureau (BBG/IBB) intends to negotiate and award a non-competitive contract to Lockheed Martin Advanced Development Programs (LM-ADP), Palmdale, CA. This is a sole source procurement in accordance with FAR 6.302-1, under the authority of 41 U.S.C.

253(c)(1), other than full and open competition, only one (1) responsible source and no other supplies or services will satisfy the Agency's requirements. Lockheed Martin shall provide engineering, design, supply, fabrication, assembly, systems integration, testing, documentation and training of TV Marti Airborne Broadcast Platform for the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB). Lockheed Martin, under existing BBG contracts, provided engineering design services to develop the necessary UHF directional antennas; analyze aircraft system modifications, and develop an indepth program plan, to implement the TV Marti Airborne Broadcast Platform, commonly referred to as "AeroMarti". In performing this work, Lockheed Martin has become fully aware of the in-depth engineering analysis requirements and technical challenges associated with the systems integration of the various ancillary aeronautical and TV broadcast systems, including a UHF transmitter and power systems required for airborne international broadcast operations such as AeroMarti. In addition, Lockheed Martin has the proprietary rights for the high powered UHF directional TV antenna system required by AeroMarti to provide a "directional" TV signal broadcast to meet the requirements of FCC Memorandum Opinion and Order No. 95-160, dated April 28, 1995. This FCC Order provides that the TV Marti service shall be governed by the same standards regarding objectionable interference as any domestic licensee. Engineering analysis and testing has shown that the Lockheed Martin proprietary antennas are able to provide a "Grade A" UHF television signal from aircraft into the broadcast target area from a distance of 110 miles and still comply with all FCC protection criteria. Those who are interested must have prior demonstrated and documented experience in delivering to (or providing) an international broadcast operation with high powered UHF directional antenna systems required by AeroMarti for the U.S. Government. Interested sources also must have all the required technologies and a proven record of performance in delivering systems like AeroMarti within six (6) months after receipt of award. This Notice of Intent is not a request for competitive price proposals. Those who are interested must submit adequate documentation of their capability to respond to this requirement. The documentation shall be sufficient in detail to allow an evaluation without the need for the submission of further information. Any questions regarding this Notice shall be in writing and submitted to the Contracting Officer, Karen Harper via facsimile at (202) 260-0855 or E-mail at kharper@ibb.gov. The deadline for receipt of questions is January 5, 2006. Interested sources shall ensure that the Government receives their statements of interest by 2:00PM Daylight Savings Time (DST), January 23, 2006. This notice is not a RFP, IFB or RFQ. Numbered Note 22.

Contracting Office Address:

Broadcasting Board of Governors, Associate Director for Management, Office of Contracts (M/CON), 330 C Street, SW, Room 2500, Washington, DC, 20237

Point of Contact(s):

Karen Harper, Contracting Officer, Phone 202-205-9030, Fax 202-260-0855, Email krose@ibb.gov - Herman Shaw, Contracting Officer, Phone 202-205--8412, Fax 202-260-0855, Email hshaw@ibb.gov

Opportunity History

Original Synopsis

Dec 23, 2005

12:00 am



D -- D-Engineering Analyses and Conceptual Design Of Turnkey Services

Solicitation Number: BBGCON1006S6125

Agency: Broadcasting Board of Governors

Office: Director, Office of Contracts

Location: Office of Contracts (M/CON)

Notice Type:

Presolicitation

Posted Date:

December 18, 2006

Response Date:

January 30, 2007

Archiving Policy:

Automatic, on specified date

Archive Date:

February 14, 2007

Original Set Aside:

N/A

Set Aside:

N/A

Classification Code:

D -- Information technology services, including telecommunications services

NAICS Code:

334 -- Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing/334220 -- Radio and Television Broadcasting and Wireless Communications Equipment Manufacturing

Solicitation Number:

BBGCON1006S6125

Notice Type:

Presolicitation

Synopsis:

Added: 2006-12-18 December 18, 2006

The U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) intends to negotiate a non-competitive modification under Contract No. BBGCON1006C6125 with Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company (LM/ADP), to provide the engineering analyses and a conceptual design of turnkey services to

enhance the AeroMarti airborne broadcast system located in Key West, Florida with FM and VHF broadcasting capabilities. The Contractor shall provide all labor and materials to perform advanced and final engineering, design, equipment procurement, fabrication, assembly work, and systems integration and testing services that are necessary to enable the previously developed AeroMarti aircraft to transmit a directional FM-band radio and VHF-band television signals to Cuba to further OCB's international broadcasting diplomacy operations. After all modifications are completed, the installed systems must meet be able to sustain a broadcasting period of five (5) hour per day, for up to six (6) days a week and must meet the directional signal propagation specifications that insures TV and Radio Marti programming does not interfere with known US commercial broadcasting entities. The statutory authority permitting other than full and open competition that is applicable to this procurement is 41 U.S.C. 253(c)(1), "Only One Responsible Source and No Other Supplies or Services Will Satisfy Agency Requirements." For this procurement LM/ADP is the only firm capable of providing the required engineering system integration services to design and fabricate a fully operational airborne broadcast platform for supporting specific OCB's mission related to TV international broadcasting diplomacy operations. The BBG's determination not to compete this proposed contract, based upon responses to this Public Notice, is solely within the discretion of the BBG. Interested firms must submit documentation that is sufficient in detail to allow an evaluation without the need for requesting them to provide additional information of their capability and demonstrated experience in meeting this requirement. The BBG must receive all documentation by 2:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time (EST), January 30, 2007. Any questions regarding this Notice shall be submitted via email or facsimile to Ms. Karen S. Harper, Office of Contracts (M/CON/CR), kharper@ibb.gov or via fax to (202) 260-0855 by December 22, 2006. Telephone responses of a firm's statements of interest, capabilities, and pertinent experience will not be accepted by the BBG. This Public Notice is not a RFP, IFB, or RFQ.

Contracting Office Address:

Broadcasting Board of Governors, Associate Director for Management, Office of Contracts (M/CON), 330 C Street, SW, Room 2500, Washington, DC, 20237, UNITED STATES

Point of Contact(s):

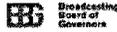
Karen Harper, Contracting Officer, Phone 202-205-9030, Fax 202-260-0855, Email krose@ibb.gov - Herman Shaw, Contracting Officer, Phone 202-205--8412, Fax 202-260-0855, Email hshaw@ibb.gov

Opportunity History

Original Synopsis

Dec 18, 2006

12:00 am



Radio and Television Broadcasting and Wireless Communications
Equipment Manufacturing

Solicitation Number: BBGCON1008S6701-KSH

Agency: Broadcasting Board of Governors

Office: Director, Office of Contracts

Location: Office of Contracts (M/CON)

Notice Type:

Presolicitation

Posted Date:

April 22, 2008

Response Date:

May 21, 2008 3:00 pm Eastern

Archiving Policy:

Automatic, 15 days after response date

Archive Date:

-

Original Set Aside:

N/A

Set Aside:

N/A

Classification Code:

D -- Information technology services, including telecommunications services

NAICS Code:

334 -- Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing/334220 -- Radio and Television Broadcasting and
Wireless Communications Equipment Manufacturing

Solicitation Number:

BBGCON1008S6701-KSH

Notice Type:

Presolicitation

Synopsis:

Added: 2008-04-22 13:33 Apr 22, 2008 1:33 pm

THIS IS A NOTICE OF INTENT. The U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), International Broadcasting Bureau (BBG/IBB), as a result of findings of market survey noted below, intends to negotiate and award a non-competitive contract with Phoenix Air Group, Inc. (PAG) Cartersville, GA. The contract will require PAG to provide air services for TV Marti's airborne broadcasting platform called AeroMarti that is located at the Naval Air Station - Key West, Florida. Under the BBG contract PAG shall provide and perform all tasks needed for the directed television broadcast missions that utilizes two (2) PAG-owned Grumman Gulfstream I turboprop aircraft. PAG has been providing such services under an existing interagency contract. These aircraft have US-Government television transmission systems installed and operational onboard. This airborne broadcast platform is referred to as AeroMarti. PAG shall be responsible for conducting all directed AeroMarti broadcast missions as well as perform all necessary aircraft maintenance, and other related tasks. PAG was part of the AeroMarti design and development team and has been providing air services for AeroMarti under a Task Order to an Army contract since July 28, 2006. BBG conducted a market survey through a Sources Sought Notice published in FedBizOps on December 19, 2007, for which PAG provided a response citing it's capabilities for providing air services directly related to AeroMarti. The statutory authority permitting other than full and open competition that is applicable to this procurement is FAR Subpart 6.302-1 41 U.S.C. 253(c)(1), "When the supplies or services required by the agency are available from only one responsible source," and No Other Supplies or Services Will Satisfy Agency Requirements. For this procurement PAG is the only firm capable of providing the required experience in delivering to (or providing) an international broadcast operation with high-powered television directional antenna systems required by AeroMarti for the U.S. Government. This Notice of Intent is not a request for competitive price proposals. Interested firms must submit documentation providing sufficient detail to allow for an evaluation without the need for the firm being required to provide additional information on their capability and demonstrated experience in meeting this requirement. The BBG's determination not to compete this proposed contract is solely within the discretion of the Government. The BBG must receive all documentation by 2:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time (EST), May 6, 2008. Any questions

regarding this Notice shall be in writing and submitted via email or facsimile to Ms. Karen S. Harper, Office of Contracts (M/CON/CR), kharper@ibb.gov or via fax to (202) 260-0855 by April 29, 2008. Telephone responses of a firm's statements of interest, capabilities, and pertinent experience will not be accepted by the BBG. This Public Notice is not a RFP, IFB, or RFQ. Numbered Note 22

Contracting Office Address:

330 C Street, SW, Room 2500
Washington, District of Columbia 20237

Primary Point of Contact.:

Karen R Harper,

Contracting Officer

kharper@bbg.gov

Phone: 202-205-9030

Fax: 202-260-0855

Secondary Point of Contact:

Herman P Shaw,

Contracting Officer

hshaw@bbg.gov

Phone: 202-205-8412

Fax: 202-260-0855

Opportunity History

Original Synopsis

Apr 22, 2008

1:33 pm

Title: Radio and Television Broadcasting and Wireless Communications Equipment Manufacturing
Fedvender Opps ID: ADP12089674090001234
Document Type: Resolicitation
FSC Code: D - Automatic Data Processing and Telecommunication Services
Solicitation No.: B8GCON100856701-KSH
Source: <http://www.fed.gov/1an-opportunities&mode=form&id=a258a39225356ec92a2b93e...>
Posted Date: Apr 22, 2008
Last Update: Apr 22, 2008
Due Date: May 21, 2009

Cached Original Document

