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RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY AND VOICE OF AMERICA: SOFT POWER AND THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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CONTENTS

Page

WITNESSES

Jeffrey Gedmin, Ph.D., President and CEO, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 7
Mr. Danforth Austin, Director, Voice of America 15

LETTERS, STATEMENTS, ETC., SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING

Jeffrey Gedmin, Ph.D.: Prepared statement 10
Mr. Danforth Austin: Prepared statement 17

APPENDIX

Hearing notice 44
Hearing minutes 45
The Honorable Robert Wexler, a Representative in Congress from the State of Florida, and Chairman, Subcommittee on Europe: Prepared statement 46
The Honorable Elton Gallegly, a Representative in Congress from the State of California: Prepared statement 48

RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY AND VOICE OF AMERICA: SOFT POWER AND THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION

THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2009

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:33 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Robert Wexler (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. WEXLER. The Europe Subcommittee will come to order.

I want to welcome our two witnesses, Dr. Jeff Gedmin, President of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, and Dan Austin, director of Voice of America. We are extremely fortunate to have two of the most articulate and ardent supporters of international broadcasting and freedom of the press testifying on the continued importance of U.S. international broadcasting, and its role in ensuring the free flow of information.

While there is certainly a place for constructive and critical debate in Congress, the administration, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and among broadcasters regarding the role, content, scope, and independence of international broadcasting, I am convinced U.S. international broadcasting is an indispensable smart power tool, given the foreign policy challenges facing the United States, the high level of anti-Americanism abroad, and a disconcerting decline in freedom of the press globally.

This hearing comes at a critical time as the world's most repressive regimes, in places such as Iran, crack down, suppress, and stifle the freedom of expression by the media. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America are critical smart power tools that are on the front line of international broadcasting, providing unfettered information globally in multiple language and formats, and acting as media surrogates where freedom of the press does not exist.

I strongly condemn, as I know all of my colleagues do, censorship and the intimidation of the press in Iran, Russia, and globally. It is critically important that the United States support those individuals around the globe seeking access to news and other forms of information. The Twitter revolution in Iran, and the Iranian regime's immediate and violent clampdown on media freedoms, is a reminder that media transparency is one of the greatest threats to the rule of autocratic regimes.

President Obama has made international broadcasting a top priority for American foreign policymakers, and it is imperative that Congress provide additional funding and resources to give U.S. international broadcasters the tools they need to ensure the free flow of information. Congress must also examine closely the export of American technology to other nations that use technology to monitor and suppress freedom of expression and press, especially on the Internet.

In 2009, many Americans take media freedom more or less for granted. RFE/RL provides a voice, as well as an outlet, to millions of people that would otherwise not have one. Additionally, despite decades of technological advances, there are still places globally where the infrastructure to keep citizens informed is simply not available. VOA and RFE/RL fill this void by bringing timely, factual information to populations that otherwise would be kept in the dark.

When I recently visited RFE/RL headquarters in Prague, I was greatly impressed that its broadcasts have an overwhelming share of the radio market in Afghanistan. Meeting with RFE's Afghan service, I learned more about RFE's direct interaction with its audience, including letters by the bag full, phone calls, e-mails, cell phone text messages, and even scrolls that were meticulously crafted and delivered to RFE/RL from Afghanistan.

As both Mr. Austin and Dr. Gedmin know, international broadcasting is not without risk. It often involves broadcasting in conflict zones like Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, where journalists are too often threatened, attacked and killed. Additionally, VOA and RFE/RL must address the concerted, round-the-clock effort by some governments to block the delivery of programming, regardless of the medium or technology.

Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, should be commended for promoting freedom of the press and democracy in an increasingly difficult and dynamic global information environment. I applaud both of you gentleman for your efforts and leadership and look forward to hearing your assessments on whether VOA and RFE/RL are successfully fulfilling your mission to "promote freedom and democracy and to enhance understanding through multimedia communication of accurate, objective, balanced news, information, and other programming about America and the world to audiences overseas."

What I would like to do at this point is give my colleagues who have so graciously joined us this morning an opportunity to make opening remarks, if they will. I will reserve Mr. Gallegly's time, should he be here.

With everyone's indulgence, Mr. Wilson was here bright and early, so I will ask Mr. Wilson if he would like to begin.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much.

Chairman Wexler, thank you for your introductory comments. We may hit a height of bipartisanship today, and that is that I truly see members here from both parties who truly appreciate Voice of America, Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Europe. I want to commend you.

Who would have imagined? Just 20 years ago today, nobody projected, November 9th, 1989, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the

liberation of hundreds of millions of people throughout the world; and I really believe that your efforts and your predecessors' helped make that possible. I know that was backed up. President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic has given such accolades that indeed freedom and democracy were enhanced and the spirit was kept alive.

And I have seen it firsthand. Last year, I was in Bulgaria and Romania. Everywhere I went, there were references, from my first visit to Bulgaria in 1990, references to the fact that they knew of a better life, a better world, through your efforts.

It is exciting to me to see the new media opportunities that you have. I can't wait for you to tell the American people.

I have had the privilege of being on China Service, where it was broadcast, television with call-in, and it never occurred to me that I would be speaking to people from Xian or Kunming. And my dad served there during World War II with the Flying Tigers.

So I am so hopeful that people around the world can learn about our country, but also learn about the benefits of freedom, democracy and free markets.

So I want to thank you and commend you. And I look forward to working with Chairman Wexler. This is an amazing achievement, that we will be working together, all of us. So thank you very much.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you. That is terrific. Bipartisanship is always a good thing, generally speaking.

Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America, they are our branding organs for the United States of America abroad. I often wondered who would have happened, especially during World War II, if there was no Radio Free Europe. They were there long before we got CNN and Fox News Channel and all the cable broadcasts that we have now around the world. It was Radio Free Europe and it was voice of America that really shined the light on what America stands for.

We all know the importance of marketing, and certainly we as politicians have had to brand ourselves through the media, lest someone else do it for us. And in marketing, in the marketing world, it becomes necessary from time to time for rebranding, for engaging in an initiative to change the public's perception of who and what we are and what we are trying to sell. And never before in recent history has there been a more necessary time for rebranding and letting the world know truly that America is that shining beckon on a hill.

In my opinion, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America are, at their core, communications and marketing tools. Regardless of what they are reporting on or the programs they run, they are, in essence, selling and branding our Nation, America. Every day, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America are on the front lines of shaping what the world is thinking about us.

However, right now, the American brand is damaged. We need to understand that.

I get around the world often, maybe three or four times a year, as a member of our NATO Parliamentary Assembly and on various codels, and the challenge is there. We have and we must live up to our ideals and also understand that we have got to repair the damage to our reputation around the world. Critical to this is Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty. We are indeed that shining beckon of democracy and of freedom, and we must make sure we are perceived as that. It is time for America to rebrand itself, to be what we know we ought to be and what we stand for. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America once again are vital to those efforts.

I have been on Voice of America, most recently 2 months ago or maybe 1 month ago, when I was speaking to all of the people of China, and I felt real good about that. I worked all night to prepare myself for that, because China is so vital to our future as a planet and as an economy.

So I know firsthand the quality of the work that they produce. I have been on Radio Free Europe as we have discussed our NATO challenges, and I know firsthand the work that they are doing in reaching audiences around the world who have limited exposure to the American experience and western media.

As such, I am strongly in support of their efforts and encourage my colleagues to support them as well. We need to ensure that they have the resources, both in terms of personnel and money, in order to complete their mission; and I assure you that I stand at the front of the line to help them to receive these vital resources that they need.

It has never been more vital to us to improve what the world thinks about us, for we are indeed the leader of the world, and we will need governmental partners in all of these nations in our endeavors around the world. That will invariably mean that these governments will need popular support from their people. So Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America will help us build that support.

When I was in college, there was an African American reporter by the name of Mal Goode who worked for Voice of America. And after I talked with him, I said, one day I want to be on Voice of America. And surely 1 month ago I was, and it was a great experience.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you. That was the most listened-to program I am sure ever in the history of Voice of America.

Mr. SCOTT. Certainly in China.

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Royce.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think there is no doubt that the neo-Marxist left and the hard left have done quite a number on the U.S. reputation around the world, and radical Islamist broadcasts haven't helped either. No doubt some of our own missteps in foreign policy have hurt us as well.

But a lot of the broadcasts that you get out of totalitarian regimes against the U.S., and certainly a lot of the broadcasts that I listen to, the translations of radical Islamist broadcast, have to do with issues other than whatever missteps we have made in for-

eign policy. And over the years, I think it has become very, very clear that if we want to engage—and certainly we did a lot of this during the Cold War—if we want to engage and set a stage for an outcome where people really understand and have an opportunity through surrogate radio to get other information, we have to use instruments like RFL. We have to use Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty models where we didn't use it.

I carried legislation to broadcast into what is now formerly Yugoslavia. We were not able to get that up and running until the bombs were falling on Serbia. I spent years trying to get it implemented. The former Yugoslavia desk was opposed. Serb interests were opposed to us doing that. So all people heard in Yugoslavia was hate radio.

I remember a Croatian journalist with tears in his eyes saying to me when I was there during the civil war, he said to me, "Finally, the radio is up and running." But for all of those years, unlike in Czechoslovakia, people weren't able to hear the other side of the story. He said, "In Czechoslovakia, they split the country by plebiscite without the loss of a single human life."

He said, "I credit that to the ideals that Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty gave people, and the Slovaks and Czechs were able to work this out, unlike the wars that are raging here in Yugoslavia, where we are working it out to the death." He said, "One of the great errors you made was in not getting those broadcasts up and running."

I also authored the legislation for Radio Free Afghanistan broadcasts, but we didn't get those up and running until after Mussaf's death and it became clear to the United States, after 5 years of trying to get it implemented, that it was important that something offset Sharia broadcasts, the hate radio broadcasts that the Taliban were running that were funded through al-Qaeda and other radical Islamic organizations. That kind of broadcasting is now all over Central Asia.

I carried the legislation to expand Radio Free Asia broadcasting. Again, it is very disconcerting and one of the issues we should look at, a U.S. company out of Texas sold the technology out of China to help them block the broadcasting. What we have done is on Tinian Island erected the largest transmitter in the world. We have new methodologies.

But we have got to keep ahead of these regimes, because repressive governments understand something we take for granted, and that is that the free flow of information is a mortal threat to them.

And these stringers that we have on the ground—and, like Chairman Wexler, I have talked to some of these stringers and some of these folks that we have at headquarters in Prague, the risks that they are taking in these countries to get information out there and what is done in terms of the great bravery that they show. But the threat under which they operate shows the amount of thought that we have to apply in terms of trying to protect them, getting resources deployed and blocking this jamming as we go forward.

So I am very much cognizant. They say to control information is to control the battlefield. In Afghanistan, that is going to be increasingly true because of the amount of influence that the Gulf

states are putting in terms of resources into the hands of radical Islam in that area.

Fortunately, 70 percent of the Afghans now listen to Radio Free Afghanistan, but all through that region, people are listening to Sharia radio still. It is a war of ideas, and you gentlemen are going to have to be part of the solution to this.

Chairman Wexler, thank you again for this hearing.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. Sires of New Jersey.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Chairman. I want to thank you for holding this hearing, and I couldn't concur more with my colleagues on all of the things that have been said here.

I want to thank you on behalf of all those people that listen to you and listen to the truth.

Two years ago, I took a bipartisan trip to Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and in the discussions that we had with different people that we met, they sang the praises of the work that you do and the important role that you played in all the changes that occur. So I just want to say thank you.

I am looking forward to what you have to say, and I am looking forward to supporting whatever help you need to make sure that this continues to be a viable voice for all those people that cannot hear what the rest of the world is doing.

Thank you.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

I want to genuinely thank my colleagues for their unusually thoughtful remarks this morning, which I think is a great indicator of the support that your efforts have in a bipartisan way.

At this point, I would like to read the biographies of our two witnesses and then go forward with their testimony.

Our first witness is Dr. Jeffrey Gedmin, President and CEO of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Prior to assuming this role in 2007, Dr. Gedmin served as the director of the Aspen Institute in Berlin and prior to that was a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, as well as executive director of the New Atlantic Initiative, where he worked with policymakers, journalists, and businesses to revitalize and expand Atlantic democracies.

Dr. Gedmin has authored several widely published articles on U.S. Foreign policy and public diplomacy that have appeared in leading U.S. and European publications, and authored the book, "The Hidden Hand: Gorbachev and the Collapse of East Germany."

Dr. Gedmin was also executive editor and producer of the award winning 1995 PBS television program, The Germans: Portrait of a New Nation, and co-executive producer of the 207 documentary, Spain's 9/11 and the Challenge of Radical Islam in Europe.

Dr. Gedmin holds a Ph.D. in German area studies and linguistics from Georgetown University.

Our second witness is Mr. Dan Austin, director of Voice of America. Mr. Austin assumed this post in 2006 after a 36-year career with Dow Jones and Company, where he last served as chairman and CEO of the company's community media subsidiary. Mr. Austin also served as vice president for circulation and director of corporate relations for Dow Jones.

Previously, he worked for the Wall Street Journal, beginning his career there in 1970 as a staff reporter in the Dallas bureau. Then, in 1985, he advanced to deputy news editor in New York and became editor of Wall Street Journal Reports in 1986. Mr. Austin served as Vice President and General Manager of the Journal and served on the board of its first magazine, Joint Venture Smart Money.

Mr. Austin served with the U.S. Army in Vietnam and was decorated with a Bronze Star and an Air Medal for his service.

Gentleman, it is our privilege to have you with us.

Dr. Gedmin, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF JEFFREY GEDMIN, PH.D., PRESIDENT AND CEO, RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY

Mr. GEDMIN. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and thanks to your colleagues for their very powerful, very eloquent statements.

Mr. Chairman, thanks to you for your initiative and leadership in convening this meeting this morning. You mentioned your visit recently to Radio Free Europe's headquarters in Prague and you kindly praised our Afghan service and the interaction with the audiences and the bags and bags of letters we get each week.

Congressman Royce, you know a lot about that. You led on this from the beginning. You failed to mention that you helped a little bit, too, and you were kind enough to do an interview for us that reached those people and took part in that interaction.

To you, Mr. Chairman, and everybody on the committee, thank you for holding this meeting, this hearing today, for many reasons, but one that you might have overlooked, if I may say. We do have in fact, as you alluded to, have hundreds—and I am certain I speak for Dan, also—hundreds of people who work for us, most of whom come from the countries where we broadcast; and I think that at times they can feel a little bit out-of-sight, out-of-mind. As your colleague said, they risk a great deal, and I think this hearing that you convened this morning is a tribute to them, and I thank you for that. It is deeply appreciated.

Mr. Chairman, I met recently a young Czech woman who asked me where I worked, and I told her where, and it didn't ring a bell with her. She must have been 21, 22, 23.

She said, "Okay, Radio Free Europe, okay." She said, "What do you do? What does it do?"

I told her a little bit about what we do. Then a light bulb went on and she said, "You know, my grandfather after the Second World War listened to Radio Free Europe," and she said, "I remember him getting so frustrated and angry with the changes in our country after the Second World War and communism and dictatorship that he took his radio one day, he put it in the window, and he started blasting it down to the street below." And the next thing—a true story; as I say, you can't make this sort of thing up—she said, "then they came for my grandfather, took him away, and we never saw him again." She said, "Now I know what Radio Free Europe is. It didn't ring a bell at first."

If you are in my business, you come across these stories literally all the time and they remind you of some very basic things. One

is the power of free media as an indispensable part of civil society, of democracy, of freedom.

You and some of your colleagues alluded to the fact that it was only 20 years ago—I am living in a city, Prague that only 20 years ago was the world of Soviet communism, the Berlin Wall, Iron Curtain, and it is gone. It is down.

You were there this summer. I don't know how deeply you think about it when you come, but I know how deeply I think about it every day when I work there. The Czech Republic is a member of NATO. The Czech Republic is a member of the European Union. The Czech Republic is a key ally of the United States on everything from culture to commerce. Twenty years ago, it was profoundly different.

You were there this summer, Mr. Wexler. The President of the United States was there this summer in Prague. The Secretary of State was in Prague this summer. Vaclav Havel, Mr. Wilson referred to him, he was with us recently, too. He lives in Prague.

You can't make this sort of thing up. A man who was a chain-smoking playwright, who became a leader of a democracy movement and then President of a free Czech Republic. He came over to our new building about 3 months ago. He actually ran for us an editorial meeting where he, President Havel, ex-President Havel, sat with Afghan colleagues, Iranian colleagues, Russian colleagues, Bosnian colleagues, Ukrainian colleagues, and he told them that what they do today is every bit as important as what we did then.

And he told them, you know, it is not just about news and information, and we need that, reliable, accurate, honest, truthful. He told them, Vaclav Havel said this, that RFE/RL provides intellectual nourishment, moral inspiration, and the very seeds of civil society and democratic growth and development.

Mr. Chairman, let me make two points; and then I will conclude.

I think when people ask me, including Americans when I travel, including my own family in North Carolina, who ask me, why does it make sense? What is it? What does it do? Why should I pay for it as an American taxpayer? I say there are two things to consider. I am speaking for my company, but I think Dan Austin broadly would sign on to these things, too, if I may say.

The first thing is this is a working organization, an institution of ideals and idealism, and it is in the best of American traditions. It is bipartisan, it supports American values, and it supports American values that, as the President reminds us frequently, are universal.

When I travel to our countries, whether it is Central Asia or Russia, whether it is the Caucuses, I often meet with representatives of foreign governments who don't always like what we do, and they suggest at times that we are out to propagandize or dictate or impose or manipulate. And I always say, we don't do that. It is not the mission. It is not the character. It is not the spirit.

I try, Mr. Chairman, in a non-patronizing way, if I may say—I always bring this little blue book with me, and when I sit with that government official of a foreign country, I say, Mr. Minister, this is the United Nations Declaration on Universal Human Rights. It is not an American dictate. It is not an American partisan issue. And article 19 says that every citizen of this planet should have ac-

cess to a free flow of information and ideas, regardless of border and frontiers.

That is all we do. Nothing more, nothing less. It is an American value. It is a universal value, and it is very idealistic.

The second point I make is it is idealistic, but we are not in the charity business. It is not a charity. What we do supports American interests. It supports enlightened American interests. And I believe, Mr. Chairman and colleagues, if you believe in development and democracy—or let me put it another way, if you believe in combating and fighting things like nationalism and extremism, if you believe in fighting and combating things like anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism, if you are an American policymaker, you have to avail yourself of the full spectrum of policy, opportunities and instruments.

But I don't think you get any traction if you don't believe, support, and pursue the free flow of information and ideas, discussion, debate, dissent, no matter what country, what time, what place.

Let me conclude. The Secretary of State came. You came this summer. The President of the United States came this summer. We have the Treasurer, Vaclav Havel, living and visiting us frequently there in Prague.

The Secretary of State came this summer, and she said this kind of broadcasting is smart power at its best. And, of course, we like hearing that. But we think it is true. We think it is smart power at its best because it is cost-effective and it actually works.

I am very eager to hear from you about what you are interested in and what Dan and I do and what our organizations do, but I will tell you what, the list of examples of how it works is endless.

It can be profound, like in Afghanistan where a suicide bomber, a would-be suicide bomber calls up and says, "I have had a change of heart. I listened to you. There is another way. It is an alternative. I want out."

It can be very simple and practical, and maybe equally profound, as a program we do in Kiev on maternity options for health care, or in Ukraine recently there was a study on the most polluted cities in Ukraine. Well, we are the ones who not only reported on the report but told our listeners, if you have kids, how do you care for them? How do you protect them? How do you address their health concerns if you are living in a polluted city?

Well, 20 years ago, part of Europe has prospered tremendously, the Czech Republic. But I don't have to tell you that the job isn't done. It was 20 years ago that a President called for a Europe whole and free, and we are about halfway there. Maybe we are 60 percent there, or 47 percent there.

There is an immense amount to be done. I think we play an important role. We like to be of service to you. We would like to be accountable and of service to the American taxpayers.

If I may say, in conclusion, like the countries we broadcast, Mr. Chairman, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty is a work in progress, and I invite you to help us make it better. I think we are going to profit from the discussion this morning.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gedmin follows:]

TESTIMONY OF

DR. JEFFREY GEDMIN
PRESIDENT AND CEO
RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY

BEFORE THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE

JULY 23, 2009

Mr. Chairman and Members of the subcommittee, it is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the work of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). RFE/RL is "smart power" at its best, as Secretary Clinton put it when she recently visited RFE/RL's new broadcasting headquarters in Prague. We are proud of our history. At the end of the Cold War, RFE/RL was widely credited for having played an important role in ending Soviet Communism. If I may say, we are proud that we continue to remain on the cutting edge of the struggle for human rights, democracy and media freedom.

Mr. Chairman, RFE/RL is referred to as a "surrogate broadcaster." In a word, our primary mission is to provide reliable domestic news and information to countries and areas where free media do not exist; or where indigenous independent media are not yet fully established.

The idea of RFE/RL rests on a simple conviction. We do not tell people what to think. We do not broadcast propaganda. The simple belief behind RFE/RL has always been that people will always choose truth over falsehood and freedom over tyranny when given a fair chance to decide. RFE/RL is guided by a set of American values that are, as President Obama likes to remind us, truly universal.

That is why, from 1950 when we began broadcasting, RFE/RL has sought to provide its audiences with accurate, fair-minded news and information. For more than a half a century RFE/RL has remained committed to honest, truthful reporting in the name of pluralism, tolerance and respect for diversity.

Mr. Chairman, RFE/RL broadcasts to 21 countries in 28 languages. We maintain bureaus in 19 countries. Our broadcasts reach Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Central Asia and the Caucasus, several important east European countries, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. And thanks to the support of the American Congress we will soon be extending our reach into the critical tribal areas of Pakistan.

If I might take a moment, permit me to share highlights of our current work with you.

RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

As Russia has trended toward greater authoritarianism, RFE/RL has become increasingly important for audiences seeking independent, reliable news and information. An outstanding team in Prague is complemented by a bureau in Moscow and an extensive network of freelancers across the 11 time zones of the Russian Federation. RFE/RL's Russian Service provided valuable news and analysis during President Obama's recent visit to Moscow. Last year at this time our Russian and Georgian colleagues were reporting on a build up of Russian forces and the escalation of tensions between Moscow and Tbilisi.

RFE/RL's executive editor tells the story of a recent visit to Moscow, where a taxi driver, listening to Radio Liberty, complained that he feels forced again, just like in Cold War times, to tune into our station for news he can trust. Russians turned to Radio Liberty, for example, for President Obama's speech during his recent trip to Moscow, as state television failed to make time for the address.

It's not easy reaching our audience in Russia. Three years ago we had 27 affiliate partners throughout the Russian Federation. Today we have seven, the majority having been lost due to political pressure. We don't intend to give up on radio. We do plan to devote even greater attention to our internet offerings and, as we do across our services, avail ourselves of the newest technologies. As Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy Judith McHale puts it, new technologies can be a "game changer."

Whether it's a report on a Russia-Azerbaijani oil deal; plans of a Russian journalist union to investigate more aggressively the murders of Russian reporters; or an inside look at how the Kremlin seeks to rewrite history or co-opt cinema, Radio Liberty will get the news out.

Mr. Chairman, I mentioned at the outset that we don't do propaganda. Let me add in this instance that we don't do anti-Russian programming either. Russia is an important nation with a remarkable history and culture. The colleagues of our Russian service are patriots. They may differ on a range of issues, but they all agree on one thing: that their country deserves decent, accountable government, free media and institutions that promote and protect pluralism and tolerance.

In Ukraine, Mr. Chairman, our work is guided of course by the very same values. Democratic development in recent years has fared better in Ukraine than it has in Russia. Still, the "Orange Revolution" had faltered. Ukraine faces a long, difficult march toward mature, stable democracy.

Our listeners tell us we need to stay to do our part in this process. We'll continue to report on religion and politics, culture, corruption and economics. We'll remain practical and relevant. One recent program examined mining safety and labor issues. Another reported on maternity care options.

Let me also add, Mr. Chairman, that the quality work being done by my colleagues in Ukraine is expected to reach even more listeners. I'm pleased to inform you that we've just concluded an agreement with two national affiliates. This will enable us to widen our reach.

BELGRADE TO BELARUS

I recently had the privilege of visiting our bureau in Belgrade. As you know, Serbia has made progress in its transition to democracy. I met with President Tadic who continues to push his country to greater association and cooperation with the European Union. But there's much still to be done. Serbian society has not yet fully recovered from the extreme nationalism and anti-Americanism of the Milosevic years. The security services have not been fully reformed. RFE still has an important role to play, both in Serbia and elsewhere in the region.

Mr. Chairman, the Washington Post published an important editorial on Sunday, July 19th. The editorial referred to an open letter signed by former Czech President Vaclav Havel and other luminaries from central and eastern Europe. The letter voiced concern about new "nationalism, extremism, populism and anti-Semitism" in some of their countries. We share those concerns. Of course, there is no simple answer to these growing problems. But I'm firmly convinced that there is no meaningful solution that does not include a free flow of accurate information and liberal, democratic ideas. That's why we're still at work in the Balkans and in Moldova today.

During his recent trip to the region, Vice President Biden called for leaders to move beyond "narrow ethnic and political interests." The U.S. Congress can rest assured that RFE/RL will help to provide leaders and citizens alike in Bosnia, Kosovo, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia--and in Moldova—with the reliable news and analysis they need to make informed decisions about their lives and future.

Mr. Chairman, in northeastern Europe, after six decades of service, we still broadcast to Belarus. Some refer to Belarus as "Europe's last dictatorship." The country's civil society is weak. Its opposition is divided. Alexander Lukaschenka's grip on power seems firm. After a recent visit to Minsk, however, I left inspired. I had met with student hunger strikers, independent journalists, NGO leaders and Western diplomats all of whom pressed upon me the need for Radio Liberty. One opposition leader likened Radio Liberty to the air we breathe.

A particular focus of our Belarus service is citizen journalism. We seek to give the people of Belarus a voice. By asking them to participate actively, by giving them their own platform, they're able to speak to each other. They're able to engage their own government and stimulate debate.

I can recall a case when an "editor-for-the-day" chose as her topic for a show, the prevention and treatment of breast cancer. Indeed, a vibrant free press is oxygen for civil society and RFE/RL does what it can to help.

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS

Across Central Asia, where autocracy is the rule and Islamic extremism is on the rise, RFE/RL continues to provide in-depth coverage of important political, economic and social issues. We've tracked Turkmenistan's tentative steps toward ending the country's isolation. We've witnessed even greater authoritarianism in Uzbekistan. RFE/RL continues to foster liberal thought in Kyrgyzstan. In Kazakhstan you'll find us reporting on issues such as a new law that seeks to curb access to the internet. In Tajikistan you'll see us covering subjects like corruption and extremism. Tajikistan has a 1,000 mile border with Afghanistan. I don't have to tell you, Mr. Chairman, of the grave consequences, should this fragile state become a failed state.

We are just as valuable to our audience in the Caucasus. In Chechnya terrible violence persists. In Armenia and Azerbaijan democrats struggle to gain traction. In Georgia's fragile democracy, old authoritarian tendencies do not die easily. Illiberal trends in Russia have had their effect in Russia's neighborhood, too. Mr. Chairman, count on us to stay the course, even when others lose confidence. RFE/RL never loses heart.

AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, IRAQ

In Afghanistan, RFE/RL delivers breaking news, in-depth reporting, and sound analysis on the struggle against resurgent Taliban forces. Radio Free Afghanistan (known as Radio Azadi, broadcasting in Dari and Pashtu) has played a critical role in promoting religious tolerance and civic responsibility. Surveys show that Radio Free Afghanistan is the most trusted source of news in the country, reaching nearly 50% of the adult population.

In Iran we're trusted as well, even if our audience is smaller. As you know, Mr. Chairman, the government of Iran jams our radio signals and blocks our website. Still, people have turned to our station Radio Farda ("radio tomorrow") for round-the-clock breaking news on the June 12th elections and their aftermath. If someone wants to learn about why it's forbidden to discuss the Iranian constitution or which women's rights activists have just received international awards, they tune into Farda. Recently, they

turned to Farda for an exclusive interview with Iranian Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, who expressed dismay over her government's violent crackdown against peaceful protestors.

In Iraq, despite a dangerous environment, the journalists of Radio Free Iraq continue to provide accurate and objective coverage of that nation's difficult transition. Radio Free Iraq's civic-minded programming remains popular and relevant. When one of our colleagues was kidnapped, messages from Iraqi listeners poured in, imploring us not to retreat or to lose faith.

As you know, many of our journalists are often at risk. In the last two years we've had two colleagues murdered, three kidnapped, several beaten. Numerous others have been threatened. Some are subjected to financial blackmail. Recently, the father of one of our Afghan colleagues was kidnapped by Taliban fighters as he was leaving the mosque in his village one evening. In Turkmenistan, Mr. Chairman, a school teacher who regularly participated in RFE/RL roundtables was arrested and incarcerated in a psychiatric ward. Last year, Uzbek state television denounced our journalists and aired the addresses of families and relatives inside the country. Our journalists and their families risk a great deal.

I'm proud that our colleagues are recognized for their work. They win prestigious awards. They are cited in places like the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times, the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times. You will see some appearing on CNN, MSNBC, Fox television and elsewhere. But Mr. Chairman, this is no ordinary media organization. Our colleagues are motivated by a desire to serve their audiences and support and advance democratic values in their respective home countries. RFE/RL is an institution of idealism and ideals. This was the case during the Cold War. It's the same today.

Mr. Chairman, there is much I could add. We've had the privilege recently to interview General David Petraeus. We've hosted in Prague former Czech President Havel and the current Presidents of Estonia and Romania. We've also had the pleasure of hosting many of your colleagues. We were delighted that Chairman Wexler of this subcommittee could visit RFE/RL in Prague recently. Our colleagues appreciated his thoughtful interview on national security objectives and human rights policy.

NEW HEADQUARTERS, NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Chairman, progress in our business is slow and incremental, but we are in for the long haul. This year we moved into a new state- of-the-art headquarters in Prague. The facility is a six story, 20,942 square meter broadcast center featuring multimedia recording studios and a modern newsroom. The building is energy efficient. Most important, it is secure. Our move has been generously funded by the Congress, with the assistance of the Czech government, and I wish to take this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to thank you and your colleagues for your support.

RFE/RL, with support of the BBG's International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) continues to broadcast over AM and FM bands, and shortwave radio. Taken together, RFE/RL programs are available on 254 local AM, FM, UkV and television affiliates across our broadcast region.

As technology has moved forward RFE/RL has not stood still. Today we have state-of-the-art websites and video content. We use texting, Facebook and Twitter to interact with our audiences and to allow them to interact with each other.

Mr. Chairman, given the unique challenges that we face in reaching our audience, we remain committed to employing the newest, most effective technologies. Of course, as fast as we employ new technologies, autocratic governments are quick to find their own countermeasures. RFE/RL has already been subjected to cyber attacks. We will continue to turn challenges into opportunities. The Pentagon, the State

Department, NATO, friends in private industry and the government of Estonia, an expert in cyber terrorism, have all been very helpful.

Of course, RFE/RL is a news service, and in the end we cannot do our job without a proper appreciation of the needs of our audience. That's why we, in cooperation with the Broadcasting Board of Governors, routinely conduct listener panels as well as surveys to help us estimate audience size. Numbers matter. It's important that Radio Azadi is the most popular station in Afghanistan.

But numbers do not tell the whole story Mr. Chairman.

In January 2008, a man calling himself Mohammad Fairose phoned into our Afghan service. He said he was from the province of Kandahar. He said that somebody had offered him $500,000 Afghanis--about $10,000--to "blow himself up." But, he said, he had been listening to our service and decided to find a way out. RFE/RL may be in the media business. As some of my colleagues remind me, however, our greatest export is hope.

We face challenges. In Russia and Central Asia we'll have to find new ways to reach our audiences. In Afghanistan and Pakistan we need to discover new means to help win the battle for hearts and minds. It's time for a fresh look at how we can meet the needs of the people of Iran in this critical period.

Mr. Chairman, as we move forward to meet these challenges, let me thank our oversight board, the Broadcasting Board of Governors. The BBG and its staff have assisted us in numerous ways, including crucially in our move this year. We count on their support.

Let me thank the hard working, dedicated individuals who work for RFE/RL in support of our mission. They work in finance and legal, human resources and technology, in audience research, program evaluation, communications and other important parts of our company. Their contribution is essential. I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the role played by our central newsroom colleagues. They are central to our success.

I also wish to thank the Congress for the indispensable role it has played in helping to shape RFE/RL's story. RFE/RL's story is a tale of human freedom, with crucial chapters still to be written.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to be with you today. I would be happy to take questions at this time.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Austin, please.

STATEMENT OF MR. DANFORTH AUSTIN, DIRECTOR, VOICE OF AMERICA

Mr. AUSTIN. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the subcommittee.

I really appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Voice of America and the contribution we make to a very fundamental tenet of our democracy, the free and unfettered flow of information, opinions and ideas.

I would like to submit rather lengthy testimony for the record, if that is all right, and then just briefly summarize in my oral statement here.

Mr. WEXLER. Without objection.

Mr. AUSTIN. VOA has been a trusted purveyor of a quintessentially American style of journalism since 1942 when our very first broadcast made to Nazi Germany proclaimed this: "The news may be good, the news may be bad. We shall tell you the truth."

Today, the Voice of America is the largest U.S. international broadcaster, reaching out around the world in 45 languages, distributing news and information by radio, by television, the Internet, and social media platforms. In fact, this hearing today is being covered in part through Twitter, with my colleague behind me here sending tweets to a VOA news Twitter feed and a VOA Facebook page for redistribution around the world.

VOA's conventional audience also continues to grow. We have an estimated 134 million people who now turn to our radio and television programming every week. Now, I can't tell you that every one of those 134 million people like America or like American policies. We do know, however, that they listen to VOA regularly, they interact with us, and they depend upon us to sustain their right to accurate, trustworthy news and information about the world, about their region, about their nation.

We also know our programs enhance their understanding of the United States, of our policies, our culture, and our people. We attract the high numbers of listeners and viewers that we do by striving to produce programs that, as both the VOA charter and the U.S. International Broadcasting Act have it, are consistently reliable and authoritative, as well as accurate, objective, and comprehensive.

Perhaps more important, by presenting news and information in this way and to these standards, we achieve a credibility with our audiences that lets them cut through the din of shrill propaganda and the fog of misinformation and disinformation that make up so much of the world's media these days.

Before I talk more about VOA, I would like to take a moment to salute VOA's 1,300 regular employees and the hundreds more of VOA stringers and contractors worldwide. It takes people, often very brave people working in dangerous places, to produce the reports that form the basis of our 1,500 hours of broadcasting every week.

The Taliban, to pick one example, are targeting VOA stringers in Pakistan's northwest frontier province to prevent us from simply gathering the news. Recently, these militants looted and then blew up the house of Rahman Bunairee earlier this month in retaliation for his reporting for the Voice of America. And in Somalia, where five journalists have been killed so far this year, VOA stringers are constantly threatened by Al-Shabab terrorists.

About half of VOA's audience accesses our programming through television, which in many countries, including places in the Balkans, Iran, Central Asia, has become the preferred way of getting news and information. In Iran, for example, something like 96 percent of the people there say they watch television daily. Almost 30 percent tell us that they watch VOA's Persian language television programming every week. In Albania, some 64 percent watch VOA television in Kosovo alone.

Then, of course, there is Russia, which presents a special challenge for the Voice of America and indeed for all international broadcasting. Tightening government control over television and many print media and radio outlets has cost us our Russian radio and television affiliates. This has prompted VOA to redefine our idea of traditional content delivery.

The result: In Russia, we are now a multimedia, Web-based service produced for a country where Internet usage is growing rapidly. At a very critical juncture in United States-Russia relations, this strategy allows audiences to increase their understanding of American policies, politics and culture and American views of Russia. It also, frankly, galvanizes conversation among its audience through utilization of these so-called Web 2.O tools.

The footprint of this service's efforts can already be seen in the Russian market, with over 60,000 views per month on VOA's Russian YouTube site; and indeed some 65 percent of those YouTube users have given our Russian-service-produced videos a rating of five stars. That is the highest rating available.

The recent protests in Iran and the turmoil along the Pakistan-Afghan border are the latest examples of VOA's ability to use both old media and new media in the furtherance of our mission. I have got some video highlights I would like to show you briefly of our multimedia efforts in both of these critical regions.

[Video shown.]

Mr. AUSTIN. To conclude, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the Congress for its support of the Voice of America and indeed of all of U.S. international broadcasting. We believe that, dollar for dollar, we are one of the better investments that the American taxpayer can make. We are all very proud of our role in bringing light to dark corners and, in the case of Voice of America, helping millions to see America and Americans as we truly are.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Austin follows:]

Testimony of

Danforth Austin
Director, Voice of America

Before the
Subcommittee on Europe
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

July 23, 2009

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Voice of America and its contribution to a fundamental tenet of democracy, the free and unfettered flow of information, opinions and ideas. VOA has been a trusted purveyor of this American style of journalism since 1942 when our first broadcast to Nazi Germany boldly proclaimed: "The news may be good. The news may be bad. We will tell you the truth."

Today, VOA is the largest U.S. international broadcaster, reaching out around the world in 45 languages, distributing news and information by radio, television, the Internet and social media platforms. And VOA audiences continue to grow, with an estimated 134 million people now tuning in to our broadcasts every week.

We can't say that every one of those 134 million likes America or its policies. But we do know they listen to us regularly, they interact with us and they depend on us to sustain their right to accurate, trustworthy news and information about the world, their region, their nation. We also know our programs enhance their understanding of the United States, our policies, our culture and our people.

Soft power, according to a recent report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), is the "ability to attract people to our side without coercion. Legitimacy is central to soft power."

While we at VOA leave the formulation of U.S. foreign policy to the professionals at the State Department, we very much agree that legitimacy in our broadcasts is not only central to soft power, it is critical to the long-range strategic interests of the United States.

Why is this so? Consider:
We attract the high numbers of listeners and viewers that we do by striving to produce programs that, as both the VOA Charter and the U.S. International Broadcasting Act have it, are "consistently reliable and authoritative" as well as "accurate, objective and comprehensive."

Perhaps more important, by presenting news and information in this way and to these standards, we achieve a credibility with our audiences that lets them cut through the din of shrill propaganda and the fog of misinformation and disinformation that makes up so much of the world's media these days. Thus, when we report on the dramatic but peaceful election of an African American—the son of a Kenyan—as President of the United States, we draw millions to see and hear and believe a story about a side of America that their own media, their own government, would often prefer to either ignore or distort. This hard-won credibility means that today, these millions in the cities and towns of a broad swath of the world continue to turn to VOA when they want to find news they can believe about President Obama's international trips, his historic speech in Cairo, his meetings in Moscow, his visit to Ghana, and the administration's policies and actions. Such trust, as the ads say, is priceless.

VOA's parent agency – the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) – has as its mission the goal of promoting freedom and democracy and enhancing understanding through multimedia communication. The Board does this by serving as a "firewall" to protect the independence of VOA's journalists. As the CSIS report states: "It is easier to attract people to democracy than to coerce them to be democratic." Exactly. By serving as an example of fact-based journalism, by letting people express different views openly, by explaining democracy, warts and all, VOA serves as a touchstone for those living in countries where democracy remains fragile and the free flow of information is imperfect: the Balkans, Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, to name a few places.

Just last week, Kosovo's Justice Minister Nekibe Kelmendi reacted to VOA's coverage of the confirmation hearing of U.S. Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor in the U.S. Senate. "Confirmation hearings are the best way to verify and evaluate a candidate … I wish this model was followed by all countries that call themselves democracies. It is important to check on the past performance … ethics … professionalism of a candidate for judge."

Before I talk about VOA, I'd like to salute VOA's 1,300 employees and the hundreds of VOA stringers and contractors worldwide. It takes people – often very brave people working in dangerous places – to produce the reports that form the basis of 1500 hours of broadcasting every week. Many of our people sacrifice every day to make VOA one of the best-known broadcasting organizations in the world.

The Taliban are targeting VOA stringers in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province as they gather the news. They looted and blew up the house of Rahman Bunairee earlier this month in retaliation for his reporting for VOA. And in Somalia, where five journalists have been killed this year, VOA's stringers are constantly threatened by Al-Shabab extremists. We are honored to have people working for us who believe that collecting and disseminating information, the oxygen of freedom, is worth risking their lives.

We're proud of our history, but like the world, VOA today is a vastly different organization than the one that began broadcasting by shortwave radio to Germany more than 67 years ago. About half of VOA's audience accesses our programming through television which, in many countries – including most places in the Balkans, Iran and Central Asia – has become the preferred way for getting news and information. In Iran, for example, some 96 percent of people say they watch

TV daily, compared with 26 percent of people who listen to radio. In Armenia, TV is used by some 95 percent of people to follow news weekly. Radio and newspapers are used by about one-quarter of the population as an information source. VOA has 25 language services on television, distributed primarily by satellite and reaching a total of 69 million people worldwide. VOA still relies on radio (shortwave, AM and FM) as well as the Internet to connect with the other half of its audience.

Iran

Internet is VOA's newest frontier, along with mobile technology and social media. We're very aware that this is the future, the place we are going to capture the next generation of VOA users. Illustrating the growing importance of the Internet in Iran, the latest survey data indicate that access to VOA through the web was as high as access to VOA through radio. The recent protests in Iran – the story that grabbed worldwide attention and caused Iran's leadership to rail against the Western media – is the latest example of VOA's leap into the new information delivery world. Traffic originating inside Iran to VOA's Persian website increased in June over 500 percent from the previous month. And despite the Iranian government's efforts to jam TV satellites and block the Internet, audience feedback tells us they were unable to completely block VOA's eight hours of original Persian programming daily – news shows, call-ins, special reports, interviews.

Desperate to communicate with the outside world, Iranians were sending VOA 300 videos a day, along with thousands of still pictures, emails and telephone calls. VOA aired the fatal shooting of Neda, the young woman who was shot and killed during a protest, and allowed Iranian viewers to see it for themselves.

"Citizen journalists" in a country where state controls the media sought out VOA for good reason – the same reason the Iranian government alleged that VOA was responsible for the protests. We have a substantial and regular audience. VOA's Persian News Network (PNN), created in 2006, commands a weekly TV audience of about 29.5 percent, according to a January 2009 survey. That's about 15 million people, or one-in-four adults weekly. VOA-branded Twitter, Facebook and YouTube channels in Persian all helped VOA broaden its audience. Results from a more recent survey in Iran suggest that many millions of Iranians continued to follow the election results and the ensuing protests through one or more VOA programs.

In a message typical of many VOA received, one person said, "*Me and my family need your broadcasts to find out what is going on in our country. It is very important and we do not know what is going on without you.*"

Iran underscores VOA's flexibility in addressing the challenges posed in getting through to hard-to-reach audiences in countries with authoritarian governments, particularly in times of unrest. But all countries are different; there's no one-size-fits-all solution in broadcasting.

Turning to Europe and Central Asia, VOA targets countries that reflect U.S. strategic interests and seeks to maximize impact in places most lacking free press and democracy. Today, we're

broadcasting in Albanian, Armenian, Azeri, Bosnian, Croatian, Georgian, Greek, Macedonian, Russian, Serbian, Kurdish, Turkish, Ukrainian and Uzbek.

Balkans

Nearly two decades after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, the political situation in parts of the **Balkans** remains tenuous: ethnic divisions persist, governing institutions and public trust in them are weak, economic hardship, corruption, and discrimination continue. In countries where changing domestic political agendas unduly influence the media environment, VOA's main strength is its objectivity. It is perceived as a broadcaster that is immune from political and economic influences that often skew local programming.

VOA's Albanian programming is so strong that former President Alfred Moisiu said, "All the politicians in Albania, and all the people who are interested to follow the events, watch and listen to VOA." According to InterMedia Research, in Kosovo alone, the weekly reach of TV and radio broadcasts by the Albanian service is estimated at 64% of the adult population. In Bosnia, 9.2% of adults are watching VOA-TV. Superior news programming, call-in shows and in-depth interviews with key political figures, including the leaders of Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Macedonia help sustain VOA's strong audience numbers in the region. For instance, Serbian President Boris Tadic said talking with VOA was "a good opportunity to explain to the citizens of Serbia that our country depends on international processes, that we are not alone in the world, and that everything that happens on Wall Street or in Beijing, affects Serbia as well."

Russia

Russia presents a challenge for VOA – and all international broadcasting. Tight government control over television and many print media and radio outlets, which led to the loss of most VOA in-country radio and television affiliates, combined with a decline in shortwave radio audiences, prompted VOA to redefine traditional content delivery. VOA is now a multi-media web-based program produced for a country where Internet usage is growing rapidly. Nationwide, 15 percent of the adult population use the medium weekly with the percentage in large cities like Moscow much higher. The VOA Russian Service's ambitious strategy recognizes that the Russian audience, which is more highly engaged in social networks than any community in the world, expects access to information to be provided beyond the confines of a traditional website. At a critical juncture in US-Russian relations, this strategy allows audiences to increase understanding of American policies, politics and culture and of American views of Russia.

The service's brand-new website features a plethora of interactive activities for the audience. Using a network of full-time correspondents based in Washington, New York and Moscow, freelance reporters in target regions, and policy experts at think tanks and academic institutions, the service's output galvanizes conversation among its audience through utilization of Web 2.0 tools. Embeddable videos are provided through both a user generated community page, where dedicated audience members interact, and on YouTube, where Russians find videos through relevant topic searches and then share them with their own expanded network of friends. To

encourage interaction even further, VOA's policy experts provide continuous analysis on the VOA blog, which is featured on Russia's most popular blogging platform, *LiveJournal*.

The footprint of the service's efforts can already be seen in the Russian market, with, for example, over 60,000 views per month on VOA Russian's YouTube. And 65 percent of users have given the Russian-service produced videos a rating of five stars – the highest available figure.

Ukraine

With Ukrainian public sentiment divided over Ukraine's further Western integration, it is perhaps more important than ever that VOA's Ukrainian service continue to reach the estimated 4.75 million viewers who tune into its TV programming every week. The service, through broadcasts of *Window on America* and *Chas-Time*, offers its audience a unique perspective of events in Ukraine – focusing its spotlight on key players in Kiev and in Washington.

Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg recently appeared on VOA's *Chas Time*. In response to a question on U.S. support for Eastern European countries like Ukraine, the Deputy Secretary emphasized the importance of VOA, stating, "I think what I would focus on is the strong partnership that we have with Ukraine … the kind of good work that the Voice of America does in making sure that the people of Ukraine have a chance to hear these important messages."

This interview, like many produced by the Ukrainian service, lived beyond the live telecast, being syndicated by two major news outlets in the country (Pravda and Unian). VOA also connects all of its content – through polls and other interactive elements – to its presence online, allowing its audience to engage in important dialogue about U.S.-Ukrainian relations.

Georgia

VOA increased its daily radio broadcasts to Georgia from 30 minutes to 1 hour immediately after Russia's military incursion into Georgian territory on August 8, 2008. Radio programs are reaching Georgian listeners via the FM network of Georgia's Public Broadcasting Corporation. We have numerous other opportunities to explore – five private FMs recently expressed interest in placing VOA programs.

Turkey

Public opinion in Turkey is split between those who urge entry into the European Union and those who hold anti-western views. VOA's affiliation with TGRT-Haber TV, one of Turkey's leading news broadcasters, gives it an excellent entrée to the Turkish people.

Armenia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan

VOA's Armenian Service reaches 46% of Armenia's adult population with its daily television broadcasts. VOA has a successful affiliation with Armenia-TV, one of the top two networks in Armenia. The service reflects the experiences of Armenian-Americans and reports on

developments in U.S.-Armenia relations as well as Armenia's relations with Turkey, Azerbaijan and Russia. Members of Congress are often interviewed on topics such as relations with Turkey and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan. "You are a very credible news organization and a window on the West for Armenian viewers," said Armenia's Ambassador to the U.S., Tatul Margarian.

VOA's Azerbaijani Service produces a daily 30-minute radio show, a daily 15-minute television show and maintains an Internet site with multi-media offerings. Until the end of 2008 when the government of Azerbaijan banned radio and TV broadcasts of VOA, VOA's Azerbaijani Service was regarded as the top international broadcaster in Azerbaijan. According to the InterMedia survey of May 2008, VOA's weekly reach was 8.1 percent of Azerbaijani adults. Since the beginning of 2009, VOA has continued to produce the daily radio and TV programs, broadcasting them on shortwave frequencies and via satellite. The audio and video of VOA Azerbaijani broadcasts are also available on the VOA Azerbaijani web site which features interactivity with listeners' comments and polls. The Service covers closely the issues of human rights and freedom of press in Azerbaijan. U.S. policies and Congressional statements regarding the Caucasus region, Armenian-Azerbaijani disputes, efforts to improve relations between Turkey and Armenia and regional energy issues are discussed in radio and television interviews with officials of the Administration and Members of Congress.

The media environment in **Uzbekistan** is dominated by government-owned TV and radio stations. The government of Uzbekistan does not allow rebroadcasts of VOA radio and television programs by local stations. As a result, VOA aims to reach Uzbek-speaking radio audiences in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan via shortwave frequencies and a medium wave transmitter. The Service maintains a multimedia web site, and the weekly 30-minute VOA Uzbek TV program is broadcast on a local station in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. Multiple broadcasts of the same TV show are available for satellite TV viewers throughout Central Asia. VOA is the only international broadcaster that produces a regular TV program in the Uzbek language.

According to an InterMedia Media Market Report of November 2008, 75 percent of those who view the VOA Uzbek TV show find the programming trustworthy. In spite of challenges in delivery, VOA's Uzbek Service continues to attract significant direct audience feedback for its daily 30-minute radio broadcast as well as TV and Internet offerings. Recently, the Service's coverage on the Congressional hearing chaired by Congressman Delahunt on the status of Chinese-Uighur detainees in Guantanamo elicited a high volume of comments from listeners, viewers and Internet users. The primary witness, Mrs. Rebiye Kadeer, the exiled Uighur leader, thanked our Uzbek Service for VOA's extensive coverage of Uighurs and said: "VOA Uzbek is a source of information that we all depend on."

Cyber Attacks

The Denial of Service (DoS) cyber-attack against the VOA web site on July 5 was part of a wide scale attack that targeted Korean and US government sites, financial sites, and some news sites. VOA's core computer systems were never affected and there was no loss of any agency information technology asset. The voanews.com web site is hosted off-site, and all public traffic to it was affected, most severely from the Asia-North America axis, with local access problems

elsewhere, such as within Russia. The attack prevented many users from reaching the site (and all the other targeted sites) for several hours until Korea, the suspected source of the attacks, was cut-off by many of the Internet Service Providers (ISP). As the suspect machines were quarantined by Korean ISPs and others, the attacks slowed and Korea access was re-established. VOA traffic from Asia since has reached near normal levels and non-Asian traffic is completely back to normal levels. Our production systems are behind firewalls and intrusion detection systems, which functioned well, and both servers and desktop machines are updated with security patches at least once per day. Working with our web distribution contractors, we now have predictive systems in place that can isolate the source of DoS attacks much more promptly.

The International Broadcasting Bureau, provider of transmission and technical services for VOA, RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN, runs a highly-regarded Internet anti-censorship program focused on web audiences in Iran and China. Emails using circumvention techniques are mailed into Iran and China, and web proxy links, allowing unfiltered access to news and other sites, are attached to those emails. In addition, tools developed by various internet circumvention specialists are deployed directly into Iran and China, and also advertised over-the-air on radio and television programs. These tools have proven highly effective during the recent events in Iran, as the Iranian Government attempted to heavily filter their citizens' access to non-government sanctioned sites. VOA's PNN receives significant portions of its overall web traffic via these tools.

Conclusion

U.S. international broadcasting reaches around the world with trusted news; information about medicine, technology, and development; and discussion of U.S. policies. We reach into households, schools, and taxi cabs to provide listeners and viewers with a glimpse of America and of objective journalism. The impact of what we do is felt over the long term, through the relationship we build with our audiences and the trust they place in our content.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you to both gentlemen.

I want to thank Mr. Delahunt for joining us and give him an opportunity before we start the questioning to say a few words, if he wishes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. No, thank you.

Mr. WEXLER. Okay, even better.

Let me begin then.

Yesterday, Mr. Austin, I was somewhat fascinated when we had an opportunity to speak and you, just in an organizational sense, shared with me why it is we have a Radio Free Europe and a Voice of America. Could you just share with the committee and the audience why we have both and the two roles that you play in a complementary fashion?

Mr. AUSTIN. I would be happy to, Mr. Chairman. Jeff, please weigh in as well. We very much see our roles as complementary to each other.

As you mentioned earlier, sir, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty functions very much as a surrogate media, and that is to say they function as media would function if media were allowed to be free in the countries where they operate.

The Voice of America functions more as an international-news-gathering organization. We report on local events, but we put them in context of the region and the world, and we also explain to that world about our country, our policies, our people and our culture. So we have different but very complementary roles. If you line up our content on any given day, you will see that. And we both support and reinforce I think each other's mission.

Mr. GEDMIN. It is hard to be more succinct or eloquent than that, but I will just reinforce it.

We listen to our audiences very carefully, and we—Dan and I and our colleagues—hear regularly that they need surrogate broadcasting. They need information that is about them, that is reliable and accurate and fair-minded. And that is principally what we do as a so-called surrogate broadcaster.

I mentioned in the Ukraine quality maternity care or how do you cope with problems of pollution. It may be a corruption issue. It may be social affairs, domestic development, a wide variety of things that they would have if they had their own free, independent media.

We like to say we are the oxygen of civil society. We support and we promote all of those good democratic values that hopefully will mature into institutions and the real habits and values and behavior of democracy.

But we, too, Mr. Chairman, hear constantly about Dan's work and Voice of America. CNN is not enough. They want quality, rich, broad programming that offers a U.S. perspective and illuminates, gives a window on American society, American thinking, American culture, American politics, in a serious, credible, truthful way.

So I do believe that they are distinct, but I am a strong believer that they are complementary, mutually reinforcing and both very much needed.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

I just want to ask one more specific question, and then I will turn it over to Mr. Royce.

As both of you I know are very familiar, recently several quite prominent Central and European leaders, including Lech Walesa and former Czech President Havel, sent an open letter to President Obama urging him to reinvest in NATO and transatlantic nation relations, and to make certain that the new engagement with Russia does not come at the expense of our allies in Central and Eastern Europe.

One of the things that struck me in their letter was a somewhat ominous point of view about the region in terms of the next 5–10 years with regard to the challenges, the foreign policy, and domestic policies that those countries face, particularly as they relate to Russia, and the concern that the United States was not necessarily as focused as it might need to be on this region.

Many of the people who signed that letter were in the vanguard of the democratic, democracy, and human rights movements in those countries. They were several of the principals that were responsible for bringing down the Iron Curtain.

What suggestions might you have in terms of the role of public diplomacy as, Dr. Gedmin, you very eloquently said, 20 years ago we never could have imagined where the Czech Republic and countries like the Czech Republic would be today. But in terms of 5 years from now, 10 years from now, given the fairly significant challenges that these countries now face in what may be referred to as the next phase of their evolution, what role does public diplomacy and international broadcasting play, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, and do we have the resources, do you have the resources, to successfully do what you think you need to do?

Mr. GEDMIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will take the first crack at that. There is a lot there that you put out.

First of all, if you care about alliances—and we do—and our principal alliance remains with European democracies for a variety of reasons. We care about global perspective, but you can't be soft at the center and then build on the periphery. You have to be solid at the center, and we are partially solid at the center.

We said before that in the project of Europe Whole and Free, we have made enormous progress in two decades, but the progress is not complete. I learned myself, I have to tell you. I took this job 2 years and 2 months ago, and when we were facing very difficult budget pressures, very difficult. You have to make choices. You have to prioritize. I will be quite candid with you. I told our board and I told my colleagues in Prague, if we have to cut, I think we ought to cut Southeastern Europe and the Balkans, if we have to cut.

But I will tell you, the last 2 years and 2 months have been an education process for me, and I have listened and I have learned and I have traveled. I have noted the influence that Russia is exerting in that region. I have noticed the influence that Iran from the south is trying to exert in that region. And we have taken a hard look at new nationalism, anti-Semitism, extremism.

I concluded, Mr. Chairman, that it would be a big mistake—so did my board, the Broadcasting Board of Governors—it would be a big mistake, it would be premature to leave Southeastern Europe, to leave the Balkans. We are still broadcasting there. We intend to still broadcast there.

I think, What does one do? One recognizes the strategic reality of what is done and what is not done, and there is a lot not done. One looks at letters like the one that you alluded to from Vaclav Havel and others and sees that when these things occur and when they are on the rise, extremism, nationalism, anti-Semitism, you have to do something about it.

Well, you asked practically—I will turn it to Dan in a moment—what do you do? One thing you do is you show up. You don't leave. And we are trying to do that.

And, by the way, let me applaud the Vice President of the United States for an early trip to Belgrade and Kosovo. I was in Belgrade about 3 weeks ago. Astonishing. All parts of the political spectrum. It means a lot when the United States shows up, pays attention, and makes clear that we care about stability, security, and democracy in the region.

I applaud the Vice President also for going to the Ukraine and Georgia right after the President went to Russia. Those are tangible signals and symbols that the United States remains committed and vested.

The last thing I would like to say is what you don't do, Mr. Chairman, is you don't fall for false dichotomies that lead you to a direction or a conclusion that you must either be a hardheaded realist and care about tough security issues and commercial relations—and we care about security and we care about business and commercial ties—you have to be either that or you are in the human rights business, thoughtful, serious, its development, democracy. But that is the other end of the spectrum. They are not mutually exclusive.

That is why you mentioned Russia. Whether it is Russia or its neighborhood in Eastern Europe, the Caucuses, Central Asia, I think broadly we need a hardheaded policy that looks at security and human rights at the same time, business and commercial relationships, coupled with human rights and rule of law at the same time. It is, after all, what we did in the Cold War. We had summits. We had arms control. We talked about a variety of hardheaded commercial interests. But we never neglected human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

So show up, stay engaged, and make sure these things are not mutually exclusive; they are part of one integrated policy.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. AUSTIN. Jeff is absolutely right.

I want to be careful here. We don't engage in the conduct of foreign policy. We leave that to the professionals at the State Department and elsewhere. But, having said that, as you look at these different regions, you find different information needs that I think both of us are trying very hard to meet.

I think particularly of Russia. As I mentioned, it is incredibly important to keep a conversation going with the Russian people. They are at a stage now, especially among younger people, where they are at once very nationalistic, feel they are back in the game, et cetera, et cetera, but, on the other hand, not quite so sure that they are ready to believe and take in everything that they hear from the Kremlin.

This is a great opportunity for RFE/RL and the Voice of America to engage in direct dialogue with these people, whether through call-in shows, whether through the Internet, blogs. Blogs are a big deal in Russia. But we need to do more of that, engage and get the conversation going, because otherwise it is likely to be very one-sided.

In countries such as Ukraine, where RFE/RL has a sizable radio audience and we have a sizable television audience, we probably need to adapt our programming to some of these newer realities, more interactivity, more engagement with audiences, instead of just we talk, you listen kind of programming. So I certainly see room for improvement there. But the level of engagement is absolutely critical.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. Royce.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you.

Mr. Gedmin, the Iranian regime has developed, with the assistance of European telecommunications companies, a method, a rather sophisticated one, for controlling and censoring the Internet. Congressman Sherman and I have introduced legislation that would prohibit those companies in Europe that were involved in that process from doing any business with the United States Government.

Do you think we should apply that same standard to the business here in the United States that assisted the Beijing regime in developing counterstrategy to try to block broadcasts from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty or Radio Free Asia? I happen to think we should, but I wanted to ask your opinion on that.

Mr. GEDMIN. Thank you, Congressman.

I certainly can't speak for Radio Free Asia, which is a different company and a sister organization of ours, and they do equally important work there in the surrogate broadcast business.

But broadly speaking, as long as you were kind enough to ask, I will give you my best answer. We do have a problem with business in the United States in the way it conducts itself with hostile regimes and undemocratic rulers. And the problem is not, in my view, that we want to restrict free trade. Because we believe in markets and believe in free trade. I know you do. And we believe fundamentally that this kind of capitalism should be tempered if not by regulations or sanctions in some instances but, you know, back to democracy, by values and habits and behaviors. Democracy isn't a formalistic concept. We have elections. It is democracy. It is habits, values, and behaviors.

So the first thing—you didn't ask me this—but I would encourage all of us to engage those business leaders in very aggressive education about the intended and unintended consequence of their transactions.

Mr. ROYCE. I am going to ask you later if you could give us a list, the chairman and I, of those business executives and those companies. Because I think Mr. Sherman, and I, and perhaps Mr. Wexler, would certainly be interested in such a dialogue with those individuals.

Mr. GEDMIN. I would be happy to help and happy to provide that. Because in the majority—I would like to say I am kind of an ideal-

istic guy, and in the majority of these instances I think these are men and women of good will who want to make money and grow an economy and provide for their employees and their stockholders. But they may not always know precisely what happens, both intended and unintended consequences, first of all.

Second of all, if I may volunteer, European businesses in particular fall into trouble in these matters and sometimes I think too distinctly from public policy and values and ethical obligations.

The last, Congressman, do you think we should apply such sanctions more broadly? Well, you know, education on the one hand and then carrots and sticks on the other. We are all human beings. And whether it is tax policy or sanctions policy, policies that encourage the right behavior and discourage the improper behavior I think are always useful.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Dr. Gedmin.

The other question I was going to ask goes to the competitive landscape out there. I had an opportunity to go to Afghanistan after the government fell, and I asked the driver to take me to Radio Free Afghanistan in Kabul. He spoke Dari, so I ended up at a Radio Free Afghanistan that was actually the Iranian service. But, since I was there, the driver could speak Dari, I figured I would go ahead and do a broadcast, because Shia Muslims were on the receiving end of the Taliban's hatred.

But later I got a chance to meet up with Ali Jalali, who was the director of our service, and it has become increasingly clear to me that this is probably one of the least confrontational methodologies in foreign policy but most effective, and expanding this further, I believe, across the globe, especially where radical Islamists are engaged, is very important.

What I am sharing with you is that Iran clearly is engaged in this. You might be able to tell us a little bit about Venezuela and Russia in terms of their engagement.

Lastly, I just wanted to mention that Ambassador Holbrooke when I was in Pakistan told me about 150 FM radio stations—actually, he mentioned that here—in the Swat Valley, 150 radio stations, and he likened them to Radio Mille Colline, the hate radio in Rwanda, as a major, major gap to be filled. Is that gap closing? And, again, what can you tell us about the Venezuelan and Russian broadcasts that are going on?

Mr. GEDMIN. I will start, Congressman, and then turn it over to Dan, who does broadcast to Venezuela and also broadcasts to Russia and Afghanistan.

First of all, you are right to point out that countries like Russia and Iran do understand the value of soft power, smart power, information, and the battle for hearts and minds. They play and they pay. They are quite serious about their investment and their networks.

They just opened or started a new FM station, I am told, in Bosnia, the Iranians did, and it is not pro-American. It is not for liberal democracy and pluralism and tolerance and all those things.

I think examples are countless. You are a father of Radio Free Afghanistan. I think you know more about it than I.

From our service—this is why I support spreading it as much as possible—the kinds of things that happen on a daily basis that have positive powerful effects are countless.

One, we had students—I told Congressman Wexler this when we were in Prague. We had students in Kabul recently call up our radio station. Very simple. All the things we take for granted. They were disabled students. They said, next week there are exams in the university, and there is no handicapped access, and we don't think it is fair, and we don't know where to turn.

And then the next moment a minister from the Afghan Government is on our radio station saying sorry about that. We will fix that. And the next moment others are on the station saying, "But a one-off fix isn't enough." We need a debate about this, about the handicapping and society's responsibility and government's responsibility.

Sometimes it is a suicide bomber defecting, and sometimes it is other things we take for granted that are very practical that have to do with civic-minded journalism and people learning.

Some of my Afghan colleagues will say, "Well, this country is not going to be in your sense, Jeff Gedmin, democratic any time soon, any period soon." But they will adopt values, habits, and behaviors that support religious tolerance, that eradicates anti-Americanism, that don't promote extremism. It flourishes in Afghanistan. It has a grand tradition in that country, actually. It is not us. We are not dictating or imposing. It comes from them. It is universal.

In all of these cases, we have tangible benefits. It is cost efficient, and it works. It has traction. There is a market for Radio Free Afghanistan, by the way. If there weren't a market, we wouldn't be there. And Chairman Wexler referred to this. If they didn't care, we wouldn't get bags and bags and bags of letters every single week. Poetry, music, lifestyle, women's rights, religious tolerance. There is a market for it.

The other guys, they pay, they play, they are competitive, they are present, they adapt, and they co-opt our language. Radio Free Iran. They don't talk about dictatorship. They talk about freedom, they talk about democracy, they talk about a republic, and they know they mean something profoundly different. It is a very vicious competition.

I think there is a lot we can do, and it is so cost-efficient. I don't think in any of these areas, Congressman, anybody will look back 10, 20, or 30 years from now and say, "You know what, in Pakistan, the Americans really did too much of this sort of thing." I doubt it.

Dan, do you want to expand on that?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well said. Yes.

In areas, say, the Swat Valley in Pakistan with all those Pashtun speakers, our Dewa radio service, we just expanded it. We were 6 hours in the evening. We added another 3 hours in the morning. We are all countering all those Sharia-law FM folks that literally ride around on the back of Jeeps with transmitters. It is psychological warfare of the first order.

This is very hard to measure, to do research in areas like this. But we look at, say, the volume to our call-in shows, and we get like 300 calls a day, people calling in, cell phones, et cetera, want-

ing to comment, ask questions. We have got the funding now. I think Jeff and his folks are going to join us in that region, and this again is absolutely a case where you can't do too much to counter some of these efforts.

In some of the other places, Jeff is right, VOA does broadcast to Latin America, specifically to Venezuela. I spent last week actually in Latin America visiting. I was in Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, El Salvador, just to get a sense of the market and what was going on.

Clearly the influence of Hugo Chavez is great and growing. Telesur, which is a network that the Venezuelan Government has started and is financing, the quality of that network has improved substantially. I watched it on television in my hotel room. They are good, and they are getting better. As Jeff says, it is slick stuff, it really is.

But it is also pretty clear, talking to journalists and other folks in those other countries, that they are looking very, very nervously at what is going on in Venezuela. The folks in Bolivia, the media people there are looking at Morales folks and saying, "How much longer before the crackdown comes to us?" They have already been accused in their country of being unpatriotic, and they figure a shutdown cease and desist order can't be too far behind. We have seen certainly in Venezuela the crackdown is now extending to local media outlets, out in the countryside. Globovision, which was the last big cable operator, basically is out of business down in that country. So there is absolutely a need for us to step up our game in that part of the world, for example.

Iran, you know, we were both there. I will say on the Internet piece of this, especially with Iran, it is interesting these countries that do jamming of the Web, and we encounter this all the time, the risk they run, because the Web has become so integral to everybody's economy, is that they can shut themselves down, too.

We experienced a lot of jamming of other television programming in Iran around the recent election. What our engineers did, and they have a lot of fun doing this, they simply moved our signal to the state broadcasters so those guys were jamming themselves.

There are a lot of things that we can do on the Internet through proxy servers, peer-to-peer devices. We have technology that, while it can't defeat it, it can certainly combat many of these efforts, and we are learning every day and trying to apply that technology.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let us continue on Iran for a moment, because it will be very interesting. As civil unrest has increased after the June 12th elections, there has been a crackdown on restrictions of journalists. They have kicked out British journalists, other Western journalists.

What measures are you taking to verify that, reports or videos or photographs that are submitted to Voice of America and Radio Free Europe following the Iranian Government's crackdown on foreign journalists and media, and how do you respond to the criticisms and accusations that the viewers, users in Iran right not be representative of the population and, therefore, might not provide an accurate picture of popular sentiment throughout the country?

How do you verify the truthfulness of what you are receiving in to you?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, sir. It is a question that we pay very, very close attention to. During the height of the unrest, two blocks west of here in our Cohen Building headquarters, we were receiving almost a video a minute, it felt like. You are absolutely right, this is so-called user-generated content, citizen journalism if you will. It is easy to manipulate. We had to watch very carefully those videos. We obviously have on our staff people who have lived in the country, so they can look at locations, time of day, begin to triangulate is this real, or was this manufactured. Our technical people were doing the same thing. We tried to—in the case of really outrageous statements, until we could get some sort of confirmation, we would not run them. We watched for the excessive violence.

Mr. SCOTT. May I ask what would that confirmation be?

Mr. AUSTIN. If we could have a second source, for example, about a demonstration coming from, say, a wire service; the Associated Press was still operating there, or other press even, or someone else. We have people from within the country that we have dealt with and we know are reliable from past experience. We would listen to them as well. But it is a matter of triangulation, and I can't tell you that we aren't in danger of being manipulated; we just have to guard against that in this situation.

Mr. GEDMIN. Thank you, Congressman.

If I may, that is a particularly intelligent question. I sign on to everything Dan says.

I came across a report recently. I try to keep an eye on what is flowing through our Iranian service. As an example, I came across a report that we aired on Tehran's securities forces. Intelligence forces had raided a student dormitory at the university. And we had video and eyewitness accounts that the security forces were quite violent. They arrested several dozen people. They damaged a great deal of property. And we had a quick editorial meeting, and we asked ourselves a question. It sounded all plausible, but we asked ourselves the question, do we know for a fact that it is an accurate, current account? Can we say with certainty that there isn't exaggeration? Three people were arrested, maybe 8 people arrested, maybe 30 people arrested. Was there violence?

Dan is right: You look for second sources, you look for reliable sources, you look for good editorial judgment to see if it smells right, if it feels right. Then, I may add, you try to label it, because it is no different from a Snickers bar in a way, if I may say. There is a consumer there, and they want truth in advertising and want to know where the ingredients come from. We try to label it, and use this expression "user generated content." We try to make our consumer in Iran understand in this instance this is user-generated content. We cannot 100 percent reliably verify its accuracy. We think it sounds, smells and checks out to be right.

Mr. SCOTT. Let me ask this as my time is winding down. I want to ask about your budgets. What are you asking for and what do you need in order to do the job?

Mr. GEDMIN. I will be happy to go first, Congressman, and turn it over to Dan Austin.

We have a Broadcasting Board of Governors that is our oversight board. They are a Federal agency. They are part of the President's budget, and they provide for our needs. In my case we are a grantee of this agency. So I would be happy if we could refer that question to them, my boss.

But you were kind to ask, so I will give you a broad answer. We, as a company, Radio Free Europe, have a budget of just north of $90 million a year. I kept saying I think it is cost-efficient. Well, $90 million, if you are an American taxpayer with all this good values, information and interest, we reached 21 countries from Russia to the Middle East and about 25 million people. If I may put it in perspective, our $90 million, the budget of PBS in New York City is about $200 million.

I think it is really cost-effective what we do, if I may say. And if you ask me broadly speaking what our needs are, usually it is not very fancy or complicated. Our business is driven by—this is back to your question, by the way, how do you get those things right? You make sure you have enough money to recruit good people, to train good people and to supervise good people.

Mr. SCOTT. My time is running out, so I want to make sure, you are asking for $90 million as a budget.

Mr. GEDMIN. That is our current budget.

Mr. SCOTT. And you are into—reaching into 21 countries?

Mr. GEDMIN. That is correct.

Mr. SCOTT. And Mr. Austin.

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, sir. We are—the fiscal 2010 budget request is for $201 million for Voice of America, roughly double what Jeff is asking for. That is up slightly from the current level of funding. It does reflect several things: One, increased programming in some key areas. I mean, Iran, for example, we just added 2 hours of original television programming. We are trying to fund that internally. We cannot do that forever, so we are hopeful that we can put that on a more sustained basis.

Mr. SCOTT. In how many countries Voice of America?

Mr. AUSTIN. Forty-five languages, audience of 134 million. So we are roughly about 27 percent of the Broadcasting Board's overall budget, and roughly 80 percent or so of the total audience reached by the BBG.

Mr. SCOTT. You said 45 languages. Is that 45 countries?

Mr. AUSTIN. No, there are fewer countries than that. We tend not to look at them as countries, but language groups. But there are fewer countries than that.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WEXLER. If I may, the 134 million is that which is least accurately identifiable. There are countries such as North Korea and China where it is not necessarily identifiable.

Mr. AUSTIN. That is correct.

Mr. WEXLER. And the information which you don't credit with additional viewership, but information received in a more ad hoc way. As people leave North Korea and so forth, you get anecdotal information through interviews. So the number may, in fact, be quite higher.

Mr. SCOTT. Yes. And I think it is also good for us to add that both of these entities are into very difficult, dangerous areas where you can't measure as much as you should. So thank you very much.

Mr. AUSTIN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. WEXLER. No, thank you.

With Mr. Boozman's kind deference, we will go to Mr. Sires.

Mr. SIRES. I will be so kind that I will defer to Mr. Delahunt.

Mr. WEXLER. Too much kindness.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I appreciate the kindness from both Mr. Boozman and Mr. Sires. I will be very brief.

If you both could submit the surveys that define your audiences clearly, and particularly those that you feel are accurate. I would like to have an opportunity to review the methodology, to know what your target audiences are, your listenership, if you will. I think that is important.

It is my belief that our strength here in this country is focused on dissent. Oftentimes one could attend a congressional hearing and hear and observe vigorous debate on significant issues. We do have a certain capacity, although at times it is suppressed, for self-criticism.

You know, we are at a disadvantage on this panel because obviously we don't hear your programming. Does there exist independent assessments and appraisals of your programming, whether it be the GAO or other groups? If you could be very brief in your answers.

Mr. AUSTIN. The brief answer is yes. Yes, sir, we do. The Inspector General's Office, it is part of their usual routine rotation, will inspect our language services, for example. There is an internal but separate program review.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Any outside groups?

Mr. AUSTIN. We have had GAO look at us and OIG. Outside the Federal Government, no, not that I am aware of.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Okay. And I presume the same thing is true in terms of Radio Free Europe.

Mr. GEDMIN. Congressman, it is the same formula. And I think the more of this, the better. This is a tough business. As you suggested, we are broadcasting to closed, difficult societies in the main, and we are working with journalists who come from these countries who have their own——

Mr. DELAHUNT. And I understand all of that. My question is you have those surveys. I would particularly appreciate the opportunity to review those surveys, those assessments, particularly the ones that would tend to be critical, because I think we can learn from that in terms of fulfilling our obligation to conduct oversight.

Mr. GEDMIN. Let me simply specifically add this point, nothing to what Dan said, but both of us regularly on an ad hoc basis reach out to the best and brightest in the editorial and scholarly world to get them to jump in and write a paper, or conduct a discussion, or do a little postmortem on what we have done, and we can make them available to you also.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I appreciate that. I am sure you do, and I am sure it does assist you in terms of your mission.

I guess this would be to Mr. Austin. We have received now in the past week several reports coming from a variety of groups dealing

with Honduras, Reporters without Borders, various groups saying that there is a serious suppression of the media in Honduras in the aftermath of the coup. What are you hearing from the VOA in terms of, and is the VOA responding to that particular crisis, that situation?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, we do broadcast in the region. Last week was in Central America speaking with a number—I was next door in El Salvador and speaking with a number of journalists from San Salvador who had gone into Honduras.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And what are they reporting?

Mr. AUSTIN. They were reporting a lot of crackdowns, suppression. Being Salvadorans, they were somewhat proud of themselves for being much better, in a much freer society than their next door neighbors had, and actually credited themselves.

Mr. DELAHUNT. But by their assessment there is significant suppression of the media by the so-called de facto government.

Mr. AUSTIN. They were very specific. There was suppression of the media, but a lot of self-censorship of the media. The media in Honduras is apparently not anything close to developed. It has either been in the pocket of one special interest or another, either worked overtly for the government, or was in the pocket of some opposition group.

Mr. DELAHUNT. So you would conclude it is a serious issue at this point?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, sir, I would.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Let me ask you just one final question in terms of the programming. Do you, as a matter of course, report—again, this goes back to my initial observation—do you report on dissent here in the United States on issues that obviously impact the opinion of the rest of the world regarding the United States, the war in Iraq, for example, or what we do in Afghanistan, or our policy? Do you underscore the fact that—I think it was stated earlier, I don't know which one of you said it, about the American view. Well, the reality is there are multiple American views. And I think that is what we should, and this is only a personal opinion, want to convey to the rest of the world, that a viable democracy means that we can have profound disagreements on a particular policy.

Mr. AUSTIN. Sir, I couldn't agree more. I mean, fundamental to our programming is credibility with our audience. People around the world know propaganda when they see it. We do not do propaganda. We do report on debate and dissent. We are required by law—if you look at that VOA charter, it is a public law—we are required by law to practice good journalism. As a journalist who comes out of the private sector, I find it a tad ironic, but it actually works.

But yes, dissent, disagreement. People around the world, that is what they find so engaging about this country, that people can dissent. They can lose an election and still stand up and say things and not be carted off to the hoosegow, absolutely.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you very much. I yield back, and I thank the gentleman from New Jersey as well as the gentleman from Arkansas for their kindness.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

I guess at this point we will go to Mr. Boozman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Yesterday we had a number of scholars and a number of individuals who testified about Iran. And one of the comments that they initially brought up said in Iran BBC was listened to a great deal, and again were somewhat critical of the efforts that we were making. So I would like for you to comment on that a little bit.

I know you mentioned money and resources and things. I guess I would just like to know where you think we are going with that.

The other thing that they mentioned was that one of the problems they might see is that with it being headquartered, I think they said, in Budapest; is that right?

Mr. GEDMIN. We are in Prague.

Mr. BOOZMAN. In Prague, I am sorry.

With a section like Iran being headquartered there, that they were maybe a little bit more subject to intimidation, some of your broadcasters, in the sense that that society is—you know, it is a lot more cosmopolitan, and there is a lot more coming and going; that it might be more difficult with some of your broadcasters either being threatened subtly or indirectly or whatever, that maybe they weren't as aggressive as they ought to be. So their recommendation was that we ought to think about maybe pulling some of that back here so that you could be more aggressive in this society versus that society.

So can you comment on those things for me?

Mr. GEDMIN. Congressman, I am happy to start.

First of all, I think there is a need for BBC and Voice of America and our brand in Iran, it is called Radio Farda, and I think they all play complementary roles. I think in each case you could probably quibble about this program or that, and if anybody raised specific questions about our programming, I would be happy to address them specifically.

I will just take up the one. Our whole headquarters is in Prague for reasons of history. After the Cold War we moved from Munich to Prague because Vaclav Havel invited Bill Clinton to move us.

It is true that the Iranian regime is quite talented and tenacious in finding ways to intimidate people, and they do that to our journalists. And we are, in fact, moving some of our colleagues here to Washington. I would be happy to engage you off line any time on the pros and cons of moving them all to Washington. There are about 40 of them. If we did that, of course, they would disconnect from the larger company and their colleagues, and there may be some advantages, and there may be some disadvantages, but it is a thoughtful remark.

Mr. AUSTIN. Right. The VOA Persian News Network, as we style it, is headquartered here in Washington. We have a total of about 200 people, part-time contractors and full-time employees, and we are broadcasting 8 hours of live television a day into the country. So it is a substantial presence. I think it is costing the government around $16–17 million a year to do that.

Our British friends just started their television effort back, I believe, in March of this year. They are spending roughly twice what we are. The BBC has wonderful production values. There is no doubt about it.

It remains to be seen how we are doing competitively. We know from our previous research that we had about a 30-percent market share in Iran. Now a commercial network would kill for numbers like that, believe me, believe me. We did some flash research in the turmoil past the election. These results are not projectable to the entire country, so I want to be very careful here, but the indication we got was about half of the people that we did survey were using VOA television as a means of getting their information. Now, we know that the BBC was up there as well, and they are our competitor, and I absolutely agree with Jeff, the more, the merrier. The more voices you have, the people of Iran will be the ones who benefit, and that really is the idea.

Mr. BOOZMAN. You know, Dan, you actually had me come over and do a live show. If that is something you have not done, Mr. Chairman, you will enjoy, and the rest of the panel. But I was very impressed by that. I thought the call-ins and e-mails were very good, and, again, the ability for the in sync translation, all those kind of things. So I would encourage the committee, with your group being so close, that that is something these guys might enjoy doing.

Mr. AUSTIN. Congressman, thank you. It is great when we can get Members of Congress to go on the call-in shows. You have an opportunity. You did it with China, I think. You can do it with Iran and other parts of the world where you can actually engage in dialogue directly with the people. We hold that out obviously to Members and to people in the administration when they can do it. It is a great way to keep that conversation going.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. GEDMIN. Mr. Chairman, may I have 30 seconds?

Now, Dan Austin is my friend, and we are complimentary and reinforcing, but we have to have a little competition here. You can't only go over to the Cohen Building and do Voice of America. Now, we may be in Prague, but we have teleconferencing equipment, and you can appear on our program any time of day.

I just want to mention as a footnote that these Iranians who work for us in Prague, who are subject to intimidation, they do a great job. And I tell you two things. Where not so long ago the Government of Iran had fuel rationing, and these long lines at gas stations sprouted up everywhere, we had quiet freelancers inside of the country who would go to the gas lines and stick a microphone under people's noses and say, what are you doing here, what is this all about? One guy said, I don't know, because we are an energy-rich country, and I'm waiting 5 hours for gas for my car, and my Government is giving my tax money to Hezbollah.

I tell you recently when the Government of Iran or in Tehran decided that it would be illegal to have pet dogs walked in parks because it was not consistent with the ruler's version of Islam, we did a report on that. We were the only one. And all of sudden we found out very quickly from our audiences that it wasn't just pet owners who were upset, the police in Tehran were upset that they had to enforce these foolish laws.

So just parenthetically, our guys in Prague who are subjected to these threats and blackmail, they do some pretty courageous work.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. Sires.

Mr. SIRES. Yes, thank you very much for being here.

How do you determine—I know you talked a little bit about it—how much penetration do you have into a country? They are always saying they are trying to block you, that they make all these efforts, the intimidation, but how do you really measure or determine how much you get into that country? Is there such a measuring device?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, sir, and it does vary. I think, as we mentioned earlier, in the case of North Korea, which is very difficult, the only way we get any information about listening habits is by interviewing people who come out of North Korea into China. Sometimes there is a business relationship there, so these are people who are coming out and going back in. Other times it is people who are defecting. It is not reliable or projectable, but it is the only intelligence that we can get.

In other places, however, including Iran, where you have a number of people who have telephones and all that sort of stuff, we do conventional survey techniques, random samples. We will back that up with qualitative research where we will get focus groups, if you will, of people to comment on specific programs. We will use outside experts to do the same thing.

But in terms of projecting the audience, it does vary. We do contract with an outside, third-party research firm, InterMedia, which, by the way, does research for RFE/RL, but it also does research for other international broadcasters. So they have an arm's-length and professional approach.

Again, we do understand the difficulty of extracting meaningful information from some of these societies. It is easier in some places than others. I wish I had a one-size-fits-all answer, but I don't, sir.

Mr. SIRES. The reason I ask that question is because Radio Marti, you know, there is always the big question here of the funding of Radio Marti. The only reason I know there is penetration is because every time I have been on the radio, sooner or later in the next week or so I am touted as a terrorist in the papers.

So, you know, it is always the question of how much penetration you do get to these countries. What technologies are you using to sidestep that? Are you constantly looking into that or——

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, sir, we are. I think in the case you mentioned, Cuba, the Martis, this is a classic example. We have done telephone research in Cuba. The difficulty is only about 12 percent of the population have telephones. And the people who tend to have telephones tend to be associated with government. So that doesn't necessarily give you a lot of reliable data.

We also interview people who are coming out of the island in Miami. We worked out an arrangement with the immigration folks where they will let us administer surveys about did you listen to Radio Marti or see TV Marti. So that helps us a little bit, but that is not projectable to the population either.

In terms of overcoming efforts to censor us, we are jammed in Cuba, no doubt about it. We take different methods to overcome——

Mr. SIRES. I would assume Venezuela is doing the same thing.

Mr. AUSTIN. Venezuela is starting to. They are not actively jamming us yet. What they are doing is taking control over the means of the distribution of most media, and they are trying to work it that way. I am not aware of them actively jamming some of our short-wave signals, for example, yet. They could; they have the capability to do that. Typically the way we respond is by increasing the number of frequencies.

Jamming is very expensive, the North Koreans are bedeviled by it because it is very fuel- and oil-intensive to run those jamming transmitters, for example.

Satellite distribution is an issue, again, with Iran, where we were jammed first on the ground. They literally sent trucks with microwave equipment through neighborhoods, which is very dangerous if you were living in those neighborhoods to get microwaved like that, the so-called downlink jamming, which again we combatted by changing directional signals.

They then began jamming us at the satellite source, which is a much more serious offense. This got the interest of our Space Command folks out in Colorado; you know, the guys who only talk in first names and all that. What we did there was simply add the number of satellites that we were using to reach Iran. Eventually they backed down from that. But it is a spy-versus-spy, cat-and-mouse kind of game in these places.

Mr. SIRES. And of the money that you requested, are you going to increase funding for your efforts in South America and Central America to combat the obvious Chavez influence?

Mr. AUSTIN. We would very much like to do that. Where we are in Latin America, I think, is reexamining all of our current programming. I am frankly not satisfied with what we are doing now, but before I go ask the taxpayers for more money, I want to make sure we have a really good plan to address a changing media situation there.

Mr. SIRES. It seems already Chavez is already ahead of us in terms of promoting his version.

Mr. AUSTIN. Absolutely. This Telesur operation of his, as I mentioned, is really quite impressive and has come out of nowhere in a relatively short amount of time.

Mr. SIRES. And what are we doing to combat that with the resources that we have?

Mr. AUSTIN. With the resources that we have, I think we are trying to—and one of the things we are asking for in the 2010 budget is some prototype money to come up with new television approaches to that market which would be much more significant than the efforts we are making now.

Mr. SIRES. And TV Marti has the same problem, I assume, as Radio Marti.

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, the same difficulty in terms of jamming. The Cuban Government doesn't like either one of them. We know they are listened to because the Cuban Government constantly complains to the ITU. This is the international group that regulates frequencies. They are always complaining that we are interfering with their broadcast.

Mr. SIRES. There was an issue of a plane that they used to direct television into Cuba. That was more effective?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, sir, it was. We did have basically a balloon that we put up and broadcast from that balloon, but it was stationary and very easy to jam. The aircraft, a Lockheed 1, which is able to broadcast, I think, over UHF and VHF channels, flies in a pattern, it is like a lazy 8, but in U.S. waters, but makes it very difficult for the Cubans to at any one time completely jam that broadcast.

Mr. SIRES. The reason I ask is because I just had a relative come over, and I was shocked to tell how much she knew about Obama, which was shocking to me.

Mr. AUSTIN. That is great.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you. You do a great job. Thank you very much.

Mr. AUSTIN. Thank you.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you Mr. Sires.

I would like to follow up with two points, given the conversation with Mr. Sires in terms of the satellite issue. My understanding over the July 4th weekend, there were reports of cyber attacks on a number of U.S. Government computer operations, including the VOA, and that the government seemed to have the capability to respond fairly quickly. And I would inquire of both of you gentlemen, how prevalent are these cyber attacks on your particular facilities? And do you have the capability as you understand it to respond as well as you would like? And if not, what do we need to help you?

And second on a totally different note, the GOA and others have reported in a very extensive fashion the problem of anti-Americanism or the phenomenon of anti-Americanism and its impact one way or another on U.S. Foreign policy, its impact on American economic interests, the ability of our military to pursue its goals most effectively, and also the security of individual Americans as they travel around the world.

I was wondering if in the context of international broadcasting, if you could give us a sense in terms of what the Obama administration is seeking to do in this regard. Do you see any impacts in terms of the first 6 months of the administration? Are we making any headway? Any thoughts that you may have in this regard?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. Let me address the cyber attacks issue first, if I may.

Yes, over that holiday weekend we were hit by a really substantial denial-of-service attack. We encounter cyber attacks all the time as a daily occurrence. This was a whole order of magnitude different from anything we have experienced. It took us down for a good 3 or 4 hours on Sunday, that is Sunday, until we figured out where this might be coming from. We determined it was Korea, and we did sort of cut off Korea and isolate that part of the system so that our users in that part of the world were without VOA; they would either get an error message when they went onto our Web site, or they would get old material. But we quickly—because we were able to isolate that, we continued service to the rest of our worldwide audience.

We have our countermeasure which we put into place which was basically to spread our servers content over 28,000 different servers operated by a contractor that we use, and that makes it very, very difficult for one of these distributed denial-of-service attacks to be sustained.

Did we learn something from the experience? We did. We need to be better at predicting early on what is going on, and we need to be able to respond more quickly. We will never successfully—don't say "never"; I am not an electrical engineer—but everything I have been told, we will never be able to prevent a cyber attack from happening, but we can offset it and do a better job than we have been doing in that regard. But that is a reality in this digital age that we are going to have to live with.

I wanted to say one thing about the impact, the second question about the impact of some of the things the Obama administration is doing, and Jeff can certainly weigh in on that. The President has been on the road giving some very successful and important, I think, addresses, talking to the Russians, Rome at the G–8, Ghana in Africa. We have been aware of the White House efforts to use new media in those addresses to connect with those audiences. We are aware of them because we do it ourselves and obviously want to broadcast and talk to our audiences about that as well.

I have to say, from our observation, they are learning that they have been, I think, pretty successful in really beginning to take advantage of that, and that does reach, by definition, most younger people, and if that is your target audience, that is an important group to get after.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. GEDMIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I don't mean to be so positive, but first I agree with everything Dan Austin said, as always.

To the cyber attacks, we experienced a very significant cyber attack last year, a serious disabling one, and we got tremendous support from colleagues in Washington, from Dan at VOA, from the Defense Department, and, if I may add, from the tiny democratic nation of Estonia, a Baltic country, because they were a victim several years ago and decided to become experts on this, and they are experts. If I may say, I think they were kind of pleased that bigshot Americans would come to Estonia and say, we need your help. But they certainly provided it. And the President of the country, Tom Ilves is President, is a former Radio Free Europe reporter.

You know better than I, it is a very complex subject, if I may say, and we have had anti-Americanism since the founding of this country. It comes in all varieties. One of Germany's great poets, 19th century posts, Heinrich Heine, penned a number of lyrics that were terribly anti-American, before George W. Bush, before the Cold War, in the 19th century.

But to your very specific question, two points. The message is important from the U.S. perspective, but so is the messenger. And don't think there is any doubt that the American President, whether you are Republican or Democrat—there isn't any doubt that because of his intellect and his emotional intelligence and his charisma as a messenger, it helps, I believe that. But I also believe that will only carry us so far, and that will not be a solution, and 2 and 3 years into this administration, I think we are going to still be grappling with real anti-Americanism both in Europe, where we have allies, and especially in developing countries as well. So I think it is a good start, but I don't think it is going to be enough.

Mr. WEXLER. As you can tell from the bells, a whole series of votes have been called. As far as I am concerned, perfect timing. You gentlemen have provided, I think, an extraordinary forum this morning. I am deeply grateful, Dr. Gedmin and Mr. Austin, for all that you do 365 days a year, but especially that you took your time this morning to share what your respective organizations do year in and year out. I am deeply grateful. I think we have done your audiences and our missions and your missions some good this morning, and I thank you very much.

Mr. AUSTIN. Thank you.

Mr. GEDMIN. Thank you.

Mr. WEXLER. We are at this point adjourned. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 12:16 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Hearing Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE

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

Subcommittee on Europe

Robert Wexler (D-FL), Chairman

July 16, 2009

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend the following **OPEN** hearing of the Subcommittee on Europe to be held in **Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building:**

DATE: Thursday, July 23, 2009

TIME: 10:30 a.m.

SUBJECT: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America: Soft Power and the Free Flow of Information

WITNESSES: Jeffrey Gedmin, Ph.D.
President and CEO
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Mr. Danforth Austin
Director
Voice of America

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.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Europe* MEETING

Day *Thursday* Date *07/23/09* Room *2172*

Starting Time *10:32 a.m.* Ending Time *12:13 p.m.*

Recesses [ ] (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s) *Chairman Robert Wexler*

CHECK ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]

Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING or BILLS FOR MARKUP: *(Include bill number(s) and title(s) of legislation.)*

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America: Soft Power and the Free Flow of Information

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Wilson, Rep. Scott, Rep. Sires, Rep. Delahunt, Rep. Boozman

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not Members of HIRC.)*

Rep. Royce

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] No [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Extraneous material: VOA DVD media highlights

ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE MARKUP: *(Attach copies of legislation and amendments.)*

RECORDED VOTES TAKEN (FOR MARKUP): *(Attach final vote tally sheet listing each member.)*

Subject	Yeas	Nays	Present	Not Voting

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE ____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *12:13*

Jonathan Stivers
Subcommittee Staff Director

Chairman Robert Wexler
Subcommittee on Europe

Opening Statement

"Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America: Soft Power and the Free Flow of Information"

July 23, 2009

I want to welcome our two witnesses, Dr. Jeff Gedmin, President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Dan Austin, Director of Voice America. We are extremely fortunate to have two of the most articulate and ardent supporters of international broadcasting and freedom of the press testifying on the continued importance of U.S. international broadcasting and its role in ensuring the free flow of information.

While there is certainly a place for constructive and critical debate in Congress, the Administration, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and among broadcasters regarding the role, content, scope, and independence of international broadcasting, I am convinced U.S. international broadcasting is an indispensible smart power tool, given the foreign policy challenges facing the U.S., the high level of anti-Americanism abroad, and a disconcerting decline in freedom of the press globally.

This hearing comes at a critical time as the world's most repressive regimes, in places such as Iran, crack down, suppress and stifle freedom of the media and expression. Radio-Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America are critical smart power tools that are on the front-line of international broadcasting, providing unfettered information globally in multiple languages and formats, and acting as media surrogates where freedom of the press does not exist.

I strongly condemn censorship and intimidation of the press in Iran, Russia and globally. It is critically important that the United States support those individuals around the globe seeking access to news and other forms of information. The twitter revolution in Iran and the Iranian regime's immediate and violent clampdown on media freedoms is a reminder that media transparency is one of the greatest threats to the rule of autocratic regimes.

President Obama has made international broadcasting a top priority for American foreign policy makers, and it is imperative that Congress provide additional funding and resources to give U.S. international broadcasters the tools they need to ensure the free-flow of information. Congress must also examine closely the export of American technology to other nations that use technology to monitor and suppress freedom of expression and press, especially on the internet.

In 2009, many Americans take media freedom more or less for granted. RFE/RL provides a voice, as well as an outlet to millions of people that would otherwise not have one. Additionally, despite decades of technological advances, there are still places globally where the infrastructure to keep citizens informed is simply not available. VOA and RFE/RL fill this void by bringing timely, factual information to populations that would otherwise be kept in the dark.

When I recently visited the RFE/RL headquarters in Prague, I was impressed that its broadcasts have an overwhelming share of the radio market in Afghanistan. Meeting with RFE's Afghan service, I learned

more about RFE's direct interaction with its audience, including letters – by the bag full, phone calls, emails, cell phone text messages, and even scrolls that were meticulously crafted and delivered to RFE/RL from Afghanistan.

As both Mr. Austin and Dr. Gedmin know, international broadcasting is not without risk. It often involves broadcasting in conflict zones, like Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, where journalist, are too often threatened, attacked and killed. Additionally, VOA and RFE/RL must also address the concerted, round the clock effort by some governments to block the delivery of programming, regardless of the medium or technology.

Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty should be commended for promoting freedom of the press and democracy in an increasingly difficult and dynamic global information environment. I applaud both of you gentlemen for your efforts and leadership and look forward to hearing your assessments of whether VOA and RFE/RL are successfully fulfilling your mission to "promote freedom and democracy and to enhance understanding through multi-media communication of accurate, objective, balanced news, information, and other programming about America and the world to audiences overseas."

I would now like to turn to the Ranking Member of the Europe Subcommittee, Congressman Elton Gallegly, for his opening statement.

Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Europe

Statement of Rep. Elton Gallegly
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America: Soft Power and the Free Flow of Information

July 23, 2009

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I was unable to attend the hearing this morning because I was attending an important markup in the House Judiciary Committee.

However, I did want to thank you for holding this subcommittee hearing on Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty and Voice of America and the impact of these organizations on United States public diplomacy efforts and the flow of information throughout Europe.

Radio Free Europe strives to provide reliable and honest domestic news and information in European nations where independent media is not yet fully established due to their history of living for many years under communism. Along with Voice of America, these two broadcast services are courageous in their attempts to foster democracy and freedom by providing accurate news and information to people.

The goals of Radio Free Europe and Voice of America appear be two-fold -- to provide the truth to listeners in Europe and elsewhere and, by broadcasting fair-minded news and information, to support America's soft power and public diplomacy objectives. Regarding these goals, I would like to know how you are able to measure the impact of your programming with respect to these two goals.

I would also like get an overview of your activities in Ukraine, a country that has seen some backsliding in terms of its economic and political development in recent years.

Before yielding my time, I would like to note that I have joined with the Chairman of this Subcommittee as a cosponsor of House Resolution 641. This resolution, which was introduced by the Ranking Member of Foreign Affairs Committee, Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen, recognizes Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty for 60 years of outstanding work to promote freedom and democracy. I would urge other members to who have not done so to join us in cosponsoring this legislation.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for holding this important hearing.