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Background Statement on Functions of FBIS

The Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) was established by the Federal Communications Commission in 1941 to monitor German, Italian and Japanese public radio broadcasts. It became part of the CIA when the Agency was organized in 1947. Its role--assigned to CIA by the National Security Council--is to monitor foreign radio, television and press service news and commentary broadcasts to collect information meeting the needs of U. S. Government departments and agencies. Also by NSC direction, FBIS scans and translates information from foreign language publications and documents. The majority of its published products are unclassified and are widely distributed throughout the U. S. Government; much of the product is also made available to the academic community and others in the public sector.

FBIS field stations provide a continuous flow of reporting by wire on current developments abroad. The information is published 5 days a week in the Daily Report, issued in 6 area volumes and an all-area White Book. Three of the area volumes are available for public subscription through the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), Department of Commerce, and the White Book is distributed by the Library of Congress. The FBIS Wire Service, operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, provides rapid dissemination of current news to Government watch offices.

FBIS also manages the Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS), which was established to meet intelligence community requirements for translation of unclassified materials from foreign newspapers, periodicals and books. As with the Daily Report, JPRS translations, issued in some 66 serial reports, are made available for public subscription through NTIS.

~~JPRS has been publicly identified as a component of the Department of Commerce for several years. Some 65,000 JPRS reports have been issued, and they constitute a valuable product for the foreign affairs and academic communities as well as for the intelligence community and the U. S. Government at large. The CIA has decided that this arrangement, though technically legal and highly effective, is no longer appropriate, and intends to acknowledge its sponsorship of JPRS,~~

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The CIA proposes to use the accompanying unclassified statement regarding JPRS in response to questions about JPRS if the statement is agreeable to the Department of Commerce. It will also be used as the basis for briefing appropriate Congressional Committees. When given the go ahead, FBIS will contact NTIS to make the necessary arrangements to complete this action. Such arrangements will include timing, contract employee payroll conversion, and necessary changes in telephone listings, JPRS report covers, and JPRS stationery.

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