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# Media and Programs

## Television

- The Commission reaffirms its support for the development of the WORLDNET television service as a major program arm of U.S. public diplomacy. The Commission commends USIA for its innovative use of "interactive" press conferences with foreign journalists, its negotiation of favorable financial terms for satellite time in Europe, and its efforts to install "television receive only" (TVRO) dish antennas at USIA's posts worldwide.
- The Commission recommends that USIA as a high priority continue to pursue technical arrangements for a worldwide television broadcasting network. The expansion of regional daily broadcast services will require audience surveys, careful long-range planning, and considered assessment of appropriate programs and program policies.
- The Commission recommends the National Security Council examine WORLDNET with a view toward clarifying its mission, long-term needs, and appropriate institutional role through the preparation of a National Security Decision Directive.
- The Commission recommends that Congress fund a new television service (RIAS-TV) to be added to Radio in the American Sector in West Berlin for broadcasts to the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.

One of the most innovative and potentially far-reaching achievements in public diplomacy today is USIA's increased use of the television medium. In November 1983, the Agency initiated its first experimental satellite television press conference. Today, USIA's one-way video, two-way audio WORLDNET interactive programs provide viewers in 75 countries with regular access to prominent American newsmakers and videoconferences on important public diplomacy themes.

### WORLDNET

USIA's WORLDNET television service consists of two kinds of programming: WORLDNET "interactives" and regularly-scheduled broadcasts.

WORLDNET interactives link Washington and any U.S. location with embassies, consulates, and USIA posts overseas. Journalists and other invited guests in up to five countries question U.S. officials directly via satellite during hour-long interviews.

Most interactives have been telepress conferences designed to communicate U.S. foreign policy objectives directly to opinion leaders and important media organizations. But USIA is also beginning to tap the potential of WORLDNET interactive videoconferences on political, economic, scientific, and cultural topics.

Examples of WORLDNET interactives include:

- An interview with Secretary of State George Shultz by journalists in five European countries prior to the Geneva Summit;
- An interview with Attorney General Edwin Meese III on international narcotics issues by journalists in Latin American countries;
- A one-country videoconference with U.S. historian John Hope Franklin and educators in France preparing questions on American history for the French national academic examinations;
- A two-hour videoconference linking American and Soviet cardiologists; and
- An interview with Under Secretary of State Michael Armacost by journalists in Asia on U.S. security concerns in the Pacific.

USIA has produced more than 170 WORLDNET interactives. From extensive discussions with Ambassadors and USIA officers during post visits, the Commission has concluded that interactives can be extraordinarily effective. An interview with a key American official on an issue important to United States interests can lead to significant prime time foreign television exposure and extensive print media coverage. Just as useful in the long run, the Commission believes, is the development of WORLDNET's interactive capability and use of low-cost satellite time to link influential Americans with a variety of foreign audiences.

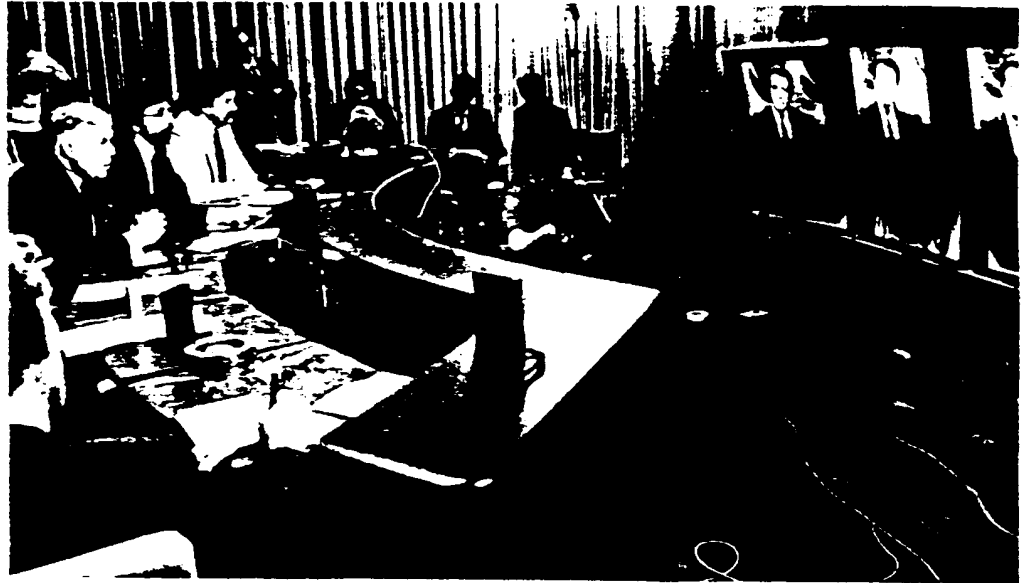
Some cautionary notes are in order however. Interviews with American officials must produce genuine news to assure foreign

prime time coverage. Programs should be tailored closely to post needs rather than to who is available in Washington or a desire to fill satellite time. WORLDNET still strains the capacity of scarce post staff and budget resources. Care must be taken to avoid forcing posts to participate too frequently or to spend time inviting busy journalists to programs in which they are not interested. Some posts believe that USIA headquarters is not truly receptive to candid evaluations of WORLDNET, and the perception is widespread that there are penalties for questioning Washington's judgments. The Commission senses that this is changing as both Washington and field posts become more comfortable with WORLDNET. Program evaluation should be strongly encouraged, particularly at this important early stage in the development of international broadcast television.

WORLDNET interactives are a successful program innovation. The Commission commends USIA and Director Wick for bringing about this visionary and fundamental change in the conduct of public diplomacy.

A second kind of WORLDNET programming began in April 1985 when USIA introduced regularly-scheduled television service between the U.S. and Western Europe. The daily, two-hour broadcasts include: "America Today," a 30-minute news and features program; "Almanac," a twice-weekly interview show with prominent Americans; and regular features on Americana, science, sports, and the arts. These programs are received by U.S. embassies, cable television systems, and closed circuit television in hotels.

This expansion of WORLD-



*Journalists in Sydney question Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger in Washington during a multi-country WORLDNET satellite television "interactive." (Photograph provided courtesy of News Limited, Sydney, Australia.)*

NET was made possible by the growth of international satellite capacity and USIA's negotiation of highly favorable financial terms for satellite time in Europe.

The Agency's initial contract with the French Government for WORLDNET's European service cost \$1.6 million for 520 hours a year of satellite time, a 90 percent reduction from standard commercial rates. For this amount, the Agency is able to reach dish antennas at 19 USIA posts (60 more are scheduled in Europe) and other dish antennas within the "footprint" of the EUTELSAT satellite.

The long-predicted arrival of global television is at hand, and USIA is taking advantage of fortuitous developments in telecommunications technology. Other governments are pursuing similar uses of international satellite television. The Commission commends USIA for capitalizing on

advantageous rates for satellite time in Europe and moving quickly to install TVRO dish antennas at its posts throughout the world.

The Commission also believes USIA was wise to experiment with a daily WORLDNET service in Europe. Although still very much in the R&D stage, with relatively small audiences, the daily service is providing the Agency with invaluable experience. It is opening doors with key communications officials in foreign governments and the television industry. USIA is investing early in a powerful and rapidly changing technology. The most significant payoffs for this aspect of public diplomacy lie in the future.

USIA should continue to experiment and explore alternative programming approaches. Some European posts have suggested, for example, that a half-hour news program produced at the end of

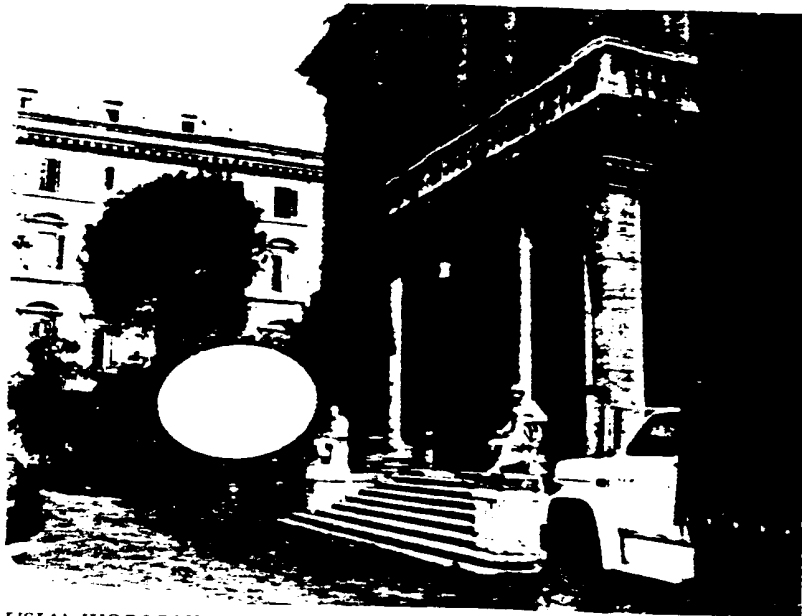
**MEDIA AND PROGRAMS**

the day in Washington for morning broadcast would be successful, since there is little "breakfast" broadcast news in Europe. Video press releases also should be considered. For example, a major U.S. Government policy statement on terrorism or the Strategic Defense Initiative could be packaged in short (five minutes or less) video clips. The clips could then be satellite-transmitted to those posts with dish antennas, where they would be recorded; or they could be shipped for timely post use. They could be used for press placement, for showings to key host country audiences, and for archival use in the post's video library.

The overall cost for WORLDNET is not high in comparison with other public diplomacy programs. USIA's WORLDNET budget in FY 1986 is \$9.6 million, approximately 1.4 percent of the Agency's enacted operating budget. The overall Television and Film Service budget for FY 1986 is \$25.5 million, approximately 3.6 percent of the Agency's enacted operating budget.

WORLDNET cannot be turned on and off like a spigot. If funding is cut due to the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act or other episodic concerns, the contacts, access, and favorable arrangements with foreign governments and the television industry could be lost permanently.

Whether to commit to daily television broadcasting in language services worldwide is a major strategic decision for the United States. It involves significant budget and



*USIA's WORLDNET antenna in Rome is one of 19 operating in Europe.*

staff commitments far beyond current levels; judgments on alternative technological futures; and tough choices among competing programs, including possible trade-offs with VOA modernization and the exchange programs. USIA has been quietly edging into daily television broadcasting without the rigorous analysis and long-range planning such a decision needs. In the Commission's view, it does not yet have the requisite OMB and Congressional support. The Commission encourages USIA to undertake the audience surveys, careful long-range planning, and considered assessment of appropriate programs and program policies that expansion of regional daily broadcast services will require. The National Security Council should also examine WORLDNET with a view toward clarifying its mission, long-term needs, and appropriate institutional role through the preparation of a National Security Decision Directive.

#### **Other Programs**

The Television and Film Service provides a wide range of other programs.

The TV Satellite File, a weekly half-hour magazine-type program of news and features, is used by 140 foreign broadcasters in 110 countries. "Science World," a bi-weekly TV magazine on developments in U.S. scientific research is distributed to 94 countries. USIA also produced documentaries for worldwide distribution on the "First Ladies' Conference on Drug Abuse" and "Artificial Intelligence," as well as extensive coverage of visits to Washington of foreign heads of state. All of these programs, including TV Satellite File, are distributed on broadcast-quality videocassettes for use by foreign television stations and TV news syndicators.

USIA's Video Library program, begun as an experiment in ten posts two years ago, has now been offered to all Agency posts. A catalog

of approximately 1,000 titles permits posts to tailor selections to country interests and accommodate the growing importance of home video viewing. Some posts report increased library usage and book loans as an unexpected benefit of the Video Library program.

Private sector cooperation continues to enhance USIA's television and film acquisitions program. By the beginning of 1986, USIA had acquired the rights to more than 225 hours of film and television products for use overseas at no cost to the Agency. The programs include the 60-part "Portrait of America" series, the Philip Morris collection of cultural and sports programs, and ASCAP tributes to Ira Gershwin and Howard Dietz.

The television co-production program, one of the Agency's most effective, provides assistance to foreign TV producers in the United States. By arranging their video coverage of press briefings, hard-to-get interviews with key U.S. officials, and meetings with other prominent Americans, the Television Service generates good will, prime time coverage, and programs on foreign television stations that may be reluctant to use Agency-produced programs.

USIA is still exploring how best to use the versatile and powerful television medium. It is important to experiment, to be tolerant of occasional failure, and to continue to work toward the establishment of a worldwide system of direct television links to American embassies and USIA posts. USIA has made considerable progress, and we commend the Agency's television professionals for their achievements.

### RIAS Television

RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) has been the primary U.S. and West German media link with East Germany for the past 30 years. Directed and partly funded by USIA and operated by a West German staff, RIAS broadcasts news, commentary on international events, and information on developments within East Germany.

USIA and West German officials are now proposing to supplement RIAS radio with RIAS television. Current plans call for a one-time U.S. capital investment of \$12 million for a new building and technical equipment with recurring annual expenditures of about \$5 million for transmission costs. West Germany would commit to paying approximately \$20 million annually for salaries and other operating expenses.

RIAS-TV would transmit from West Berlin. Its signal would carry about 25 miles and reach an estimated 5 million people, including 2 million in West Berlin and 3 million in East Berlin and surrounding population centers of East Germany. Larger West German

audiences can be reached if the signal is transmitted on cable systems. RIAS-TV's programs and editorial policies would be similar to those of RIAS radio.

The Commission finds the justification for RIAS-TV convincing. It would provide balanced, accurate news and an American perspective to younger audiences that increasingly are turning to television in countries that are important to U.S. interests. Although West German television is seen by a majority of East Germans, the programs are produced for West German audiences. They often do not report on developments in East Germany and frequently are slanted against U.S. policies. RIAS-TV would produce programs primarily for East German audiences.

The Commission recommends that Congress fund RIAS-TV as an unequivocal signal of U.S. commitment to the vitality of Berlin, to the free flow of ideas in Central Europe, and to the aspirations of the East German people.



*Nepalese patrons view videotapes at USIA's library in Kathmandu.*

**MEDIA AND PROGRAMS***Voice of America*

- The Commission finds that VOA is not moving as rapidly as national needs require in meeting the goals of its multi-year modernization program.
- The Commission finds that VOA continues to be surpassed by other major international radio broadcasters in facilities, equipment, personnel, signal strength, and broadcast hours. It welcomes Congressional willingness to provide adequate funding for modernization.
- The Commission finds that OMB's \$1.3 billion cap on VOA's multi-year modernization plan will inhibit VOA's ability to meet the goals developed in response to the policy direction of the President and the National Security Council. The Commission recommends that OMB, USIA, and the NSC review VOA's modernization budget in light of recent detailed planning, current price estimates, increased physical security costs, the terms of negotiated site agreements, and overall broadcast requirements.
- The Commission is disturbed by the large turnover of VOA Directors and finds that prolonged senior level vacancies and lack of continuity have adversely affected the implementation of modernization initiatives and the management of ongoing VOA programs.
- The Commission finds that increased resources and significant U.S. private sector participation are needed to nourish VOA's increasingly effective training program for Third World radio broadcasters.

- The Commission commends USIA for resuming daily VOA broadcasts to Western Europe, for the quality of VOA Europe's audience research design, and for its innovative use of AM, FM, satellite, and cable delivery systems. USIA should evaluate VOA Europe carefully to determine whether it is reaching significant audiences with effective programming. Addition of German, French, Italian, and Spanish language broadcasts should be based on a thorough assessment of research findings.
- The Commission commends USIA for getting VOA's Radio Marti program on the air and encourages the Agency to undertake thorough evaluation of this important new service.

**T**he Voice of America is one of the most important instruments of U.S. public diplomacy. Broadcasting in 42 languages, it reaches a weekly worldwide radio audience of 119 million with news, unfiltered explanations of U.S. policies, and balanced programs on American thought and culture. For many listeners, it is their only source of accurate news and information.

VOA is undergoing a much needed renaissance. As it enters its 45th year, VOA broadcasts more programs each week than at any time since World War II. It also has embarked on an effort to expand and upgrade its technical facilities to modern electronic standards.

The Commission is pleased with the creativity and quality of VOA's recent program enhancements. We

remain concerned, however, that VOA is not moving as rapidly as national needs require in meeting the goals of its multi-year modernization program.

**Modernization**

The case for VOA modernization bears repeating. More than 80 percent of VOA's transmitters are at least 15 years old. More than 35 percent were manufactured before 1955. VOA still has only six operating 500 KW superpower transmitters (actually they are combinations of aging 250 KWs) compared to 37 used by the Soviet Union. France has 11, West Germany 9, and Great Britain 8. In broadcasting hours to Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and East Asia, VOA ranks no higher than fourth in comparison with other major international radio broadcasters.



*President Reagan speaks to the Soviet people before the Geneva Summit from VOA's studios in Washington. The address was translated into 42 languages by VOA for worldwide broadcast and carried on USIA's WORLDNET satellite television network.*

President Reagan announced plans for VOA modernization in 1982:

*"We intend to move forward consistent with budgetary requirements with a program to modernize our primary means of international communication, our international radio system . . . the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty have been neglected for many years. Their equipment is old and deteriorating, their program resources strained. Little has been done to counter the jamming that has intensified in recent years."*

Four years later, in response to directives from the National Security Council and with the strong support of Congress, VOA has made progress. Negotiated agreements have been reached for new facilities in Sri Lanka, Morocco, Thailand, Botswana, Belize, and with Radio Antilles. Negotiations are nearing completion with St. Vincent, Israel, and Puerto Rico. A medium wave station in Costa Rica has been added to the VOA network, and a medium wave station in Belize is scheduled to begin broadcasting in the spring of 1986. The Commission had the oppor-

tunity to view the first of four prototype 500 KW transmitters being installed for testing at the Murrow Relay Station in Greenville, North Carolina. VOA has augmented its engineering staff and undertaken a number of "front-end" engineering studies.

Yet the Commission is deeply troubled that VOA continues to be surpassed by other major international broadcasters in facilities, equipment, personnel, signal strength, and broadcast hours. In our report last year we expressed concern that USIA is not moving quickly enough into the construction and implementation phase of the modernization process. A year later, that concern remains.

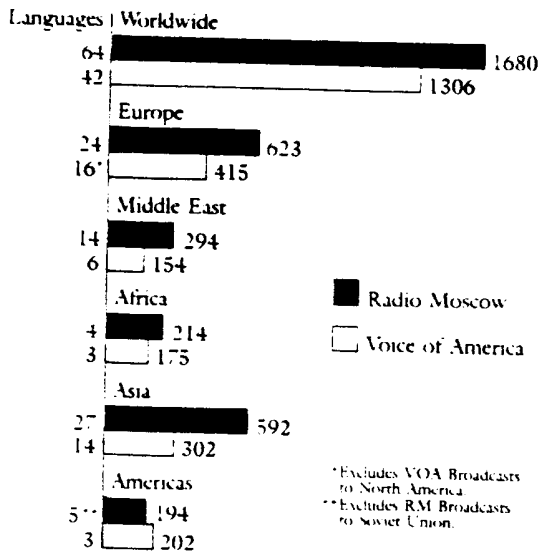
The modernization program has been handicapped by lack of continuity in leadership at the Voice of America. VOA has had four Directors, four Acting Directors, two Chief Engineers, and two Acting Chief Engineers since 1981. For almost half this period, VOA has been led by Acting Directors. The Commission recognizes this is due to a variety of circumstances.

Nevertheless, prolonged senior level vacancies and disruptions caused by frequent turnovers at the top have adversely affected implementation of modernization initiatives and management continuity for ongoing programs. The Commission also believes that when these vacancies occur out of necessity, stronger leadership should be exerted in finding replacements in an expeditious manner.

VOA also faces a fundamental budget question. OMB has imposed a \$1.3 billion cap on VOA's multi-year modernization program. This will inhibit VOA's ability to meet the goals developed in response to the policy directives of the President and the National Security Council with the support of the Congress. It would be unfortunate if VOA were forced to make major long-range decisions now, based on assumptions of a funding shortfall in coming years, that would limit the Agency's ability to carry out the full modernization program under existing timetables.



*VOYAGER, VOA's broadcast van and traveling studio, visited 30 states last year adding a new dimension to VOA's reporting on people and events in American life.*

**MEDIA AND PROGRAMS****Voice of America & Radio Moscow  
Weekly Program Hours (1985)**

The Commission has observed strong bipartisan support in the Congress for VOA modernization. A national consensus exists to get on with a task that will take years under the best of circumstances. The Commission recommends that OMB, USIA and the National Security Council review VOA's modernization budget in light of recent detailed planning, current price estimates, increased physical security costs, the terms of negotiated site agreements, and overall broadcast coverage requirements.

VOA is facing increasing competition for audiences from television and high-powered regional and international radio broadcasters, who are challenging it with stronger signals, improved production techniques, and more attractive programming. VOA must spend its modernization resources wisely, but it must also modernize more rapidly if it is to hold its listeners and attract new ones in this competitive communications environment.

**Program Enhancements**

VOA continues to make improvements in program quality and delivery.

During the past year VOA's broadcasts increased from 987 to 1327 hours weekly, largely from the introduction of two major new services, VOA Europe and the Radio Marti program. Broadcasts expanded in eight other services: Albanian, Arabic, French, Czech, Slovak, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Thai.<sup>2</sup>

The increases include a one-hour early morning show to the Central USSR, an hour-long evening program to Czechoslovakia, and additional half-hour shows in the Thai and Albanian services. For Latin America, VOA has added an hour to its evening show, "Buenas Noches, America," a half-hour midday news show, and a half-hour to its morning show, "Buenos Dias, America."

A new computerized system called SNAP (System for News and Programming) will significantly reduce the time it takes to write and translate in VOA's 42 languages, including Russian, Arabic, and Chinese.

"Sound On Demand," VOA's electronic audio distribution system, also began operation. The system delivers news actualities instantly to all of VOA's writers and greatly increases the amount of live, on-the-scene reportage in VOA's broadcasts.

These developments, new and renovated recording studios, and replacement of vacuum-tube equipment in the Washington Master Control center constitute VOA's "indoor modernization." Less heralded than other aspects

of modernization, they nevertheless add up to a significant change for the better in VOA's daily operations.

The Commission is especially pleased that VOA continues to give audience research and program quality control a high priority. VOA's use of USIA's Office of Research for audience studies is extensive and should serve as a model for other Agency media elements. Increased research coordination between VOA, the BBC, and the Board for International Broadcasting minimizes duplication of effort and expands the research findings available to each. VOA's enacted operating budget in FY 1986 is \$176.9 million, approximately 26 percent of USIA's overall operating budget and the largest single media budget in the Agency. In an era of reduced federal spending, it is important that VOA continue to emphasize program evaluation.

Finally, VOA's Forum Lectures bring distinguished guest speakers from in and out of government to USIA. Many are interviewed on VOA's broadcasts. The series stimulates new ideas and fresh thinking. It is precisely what the Commission had in mind last year when it recommended that USIA's top management encourage responsible internal discussion of professional issues.

**Training for Third World Broadcasters**

Last year the Commission endorsed VOA's fledgling training program for broadcast profession-



als from Third World countries. We are pleased the program has grown, with five workshops planned this year at VOA headquarters and six overseas in South Asia, the Caribbean, East Africa, Southern Africa, and the Philippines. Each will last several weeks and will reach up to 50 broadcasters.

Traditionally, USIA has not been a "training" organization such as AID or the Peace Corps. USIA needs to strengthen the resources it allocates to its own training programs. The BBC and other European broadcasters have long conducted excellent training programs for journalists in the developing world, and have established standards and groups of alumni that are enviable.

USIA also should cooperate more closely with AID. As Rep. Dante Fascell (D-FL) wrote recently, "USIA could usefully com-

plement a number of AID's development activities by helping to train journalists, communications technicians, and engineers, teachers, and the like. By permitting each agency to undertake the activities to which it is best suited, the missions of public diplomacy and development, as well as the foreign policy goals of the United States, would be strengthened."<sup>3</sup>

Unlike the BBC and Deutsche Welle, VOA has no domestic network on which to draw in providing this kind of training. To relate fully to the domestic broadcasting background of most foreign radio professionals, VOA needs to supplement its international broadcasting experience by tapping the expertise of the American private sector. The Commission encourages VOA to continue to develop links with U.S. radio stations, net-

works, foundations, and universities for this purpose.

### VOA Europe

On October 15, 1985, the Voice of America resumed targeted English language broadcasting to Western Europe for the first time in 25 years. Broadcasting around-the-clock, seven days a week in English, VOA is seeking to reach younger Europeans who have no personal memory of World War II and who may have misconceptions about the U.S., its policies, and the shared values of the past.

VOA Europe is the result of long-term planning and bipartisan support in the Congress. Extensive multi-country audience research studies, recommended by this Commission four years ago, have



Advisory Commission members look at a newly installed 500 KW shortwave transmitter being tested at VOA's Edward R. Murrow relay station in Greenville, North Carolina. (From left to right) Chairman Edwin J. Feulner, Jr. and Commissioners Priscilla L. Buckley, Hershey Gold, and Tom C. Korologos. (Photo by Tommy Forrest)



VOA's American Republics division uses "Code-a-Phone" to provide short, updated reports in English and Spanish on breaking news stories to local radio stations throughout Latin America. The stations call VOA by telephone and place the reports on their own news programs.

**MEDIA AND PROGRAMS**

guided decisions on programming and delivery of the VOA signal in the highly competitive European radio environment.

Its program format resembles a "full service" U.S. commercial radio station with contemporary American and European hit music, hourly news broadcasts, VOA editorials, public affairs programs, and Americana segments. The broad-

casts originate in Washington and are sent by satellite to Munich for relay throughout Europe via leased AM and FM frequencies and cable systems. Programs are carried by the European Communications Satellite (ECS) and recently on medium wave from VOA transmitters in Munich.

The Commission commends USIA for initiating VOA Europe, for the quality of its audience research design, and for its innovative use of AM, FM, satellite, and cable delivery systems. USIA should evaluate VOA Europe carefully, however, to determine whether it is reaching significant audiences with effective programming. Addition of German, French, Italian, and Spanish language broadcasts should be based on a thorough assessment of research findings.

#### **Radio Marti Program**

On May 20, 1985, VOA's Radio Marti program of broadcasting to Cuba went on the air. News, public affairs, VOA editorials, music, and cultural, scientific, and entertainment features comprise its broadcast schedule, which was increased from 14 1/2 to 17 1/2 hours a day early in 1986.

Following initial protests and veiled threats to retaliate, Cuban authorities apparently have chosen to compete by upgrading the quality of their own broadcasting. So far, the gloomy predictions of Radio Marti's U.S. critics have not come to pass.

The Commission commends USIA for getting this valuable new service on the air. Despite ambiguous legislative intent, the Agency

has successfully developed high-quality programming fully in accord with VOA standards of objectivity, accuracy, and balance. At the same time, the Cuban people are now able to receive news, ideas, and information about Cuba not otherwise available to them.

The Radio Marti program is broadcast on shortwave and from a VOA transmitter in Marathon, Florida, on the 1180 medium wave frequency. VOA officials estimate the signal reaches the entire country. This was corroborated in Commission discussions with Radio Marti program monitors at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba. Although reliable audience figures do not exist, focus group studies suggest the Radio Marti program has listeners in every demographic and professional group in Cuba.

The Commission encourages USIA to evaluate this important new service thoroughly to assure lively, relevant programming and compliance with legislative mandates.

Captive Nations Week Proclamation, July 19, 1982

VOA, broadcasting 1327 hours weekly in 42 languages, is still behind Radio Moscow, broadcasting 1680 hours weekly in 64 languages. Overall, however, U.S. international broadcasting moved ahead of the Soviet Union last year. The Voice of America, Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Free Afghanistan now broadcast 2353 hours weekly in comparison to a Soviet total of 2220 hours.

*Foreign Service Journal*, January, 1984



*VOA's Radio Marti program is fed by satellite from Washington to this relay station in Marathon Key, Florida for broadcast to Cuba on a 50 KW medium wave transmitter.*

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