

111TH CONGRESS }
2d Session

COMMITTEE PRINT

{ S. PRT.
111-46

**CUBA: IMMEDIATE ACTION IS NEEDED
TO ENSURE THE SURVIVABILITY
OF RADIO AND TV MARTI**

A REPORT
TO THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

APRIL 29, 2010



Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations

Available via World Wide Web:
<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/congress/index.html>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

56-157 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2010

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

JOHN F. KERRY, Massachusetts, *Chairman*

CHRISTOPHER J. DODD, Connecticut	RICHARD G. LUGAR, Indiana
RUSSELL D. FEINGOLD, Wisconsin	BOB CORKER, Tennessee
BARBARA BOXER, California	JOHNNY ISAKSON, Georgia
ROBERT MENENDEZ, New Jersey	JAMES E. RISCH, Idaho
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, Maryland	JIM DEMINT, South Carolina
ROBERT P. CASEY, JR., Pennsylvania	JOHN BARRASSO, Wyoming
JIM WEBB, Virginia	ROGER F. WICKER, Mississippi
JEANNE SHAHEEN, New Hampshire	JAMES M. INHOFE, Oklahoma
EDWARD E. KAUFMAN, Delaware	
KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, New York	

FRANK G. LOWENSTEIN, *Staff Director*

KENNETH A. MYERS, JR., *Republican Staff Director*

CONTENTS

Letter of Transmittal	Page v
Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	3
2. Background	3
3. Opposition in Congress Persists	4
4. Problems Began Almost Immediately After Creation	5
Adhering to Journalistic Standards	5
Audience Size	7
Cuban Government Jamming	10
5. OCB Management Also Dealing with Other Problems	11
6. Recommendations	12
How Radio and TV Marti Broadcast	14
Appendix: Broadcasting Board of Governors Organizational Chart	15

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC, April 19, 2010.

DEAR COLLEAGUE: This report by the committee majority staff is part of our ongoing examination into the efficacy of Radio and TV Marti. Radio Marti was created in 1983 to support the Cuban people in their quest for “accurate, unbiased, and consistently reliable” news and entertainment; TV Marti followed in 1990. Unfortunately, listeners and viewers never received the kind of high quality programming that was originally intended. Problems with adherence to traditional journalistic standards, miniscule audience size, Cuban Government jamming, and allegations of cronyism have dogged the program since its creation. As a result, Congress has reduced TV Marti’s funding and has strongly encouraged Radio Marti to ensure that its broadcasts adhere to journalistic standards practiced by the Voice of America. Indeed, this report goes further, and recommends that the Office of Cuba Broadcasting be incorporated into the Voice of America.

This report is based on extensive staff interviews with Radio and TV Marti officials, as well as officials of the International Broadcasting Bureau and the Broadcasting Board of Governors. It also relies on comprehensive investigative reports published by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

JOHN F. KERRY,
Chairman.

CUBA: IMMEDIATE ACTION IS NEEDED TO ENSURE THE SURVIVABILITY OF RADIO AND TV MARTI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Radio and TV Marti, the U.S. Government's broadcasters to Cuba, continue to fail in their efforts to influence Cuban society, politics, and policy.

Radio Marti was created in 1983 as a U.S. program to support the right of the Cuban people to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas; to further the open communication of information and ideas to Cuba; to serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news to Cuba; and to provide news and commentary about events inside Cuba. TV Marti, created in 1990, sought to expand those goals with television programming related to Cuba. Both outlets are located in Miami.

Radio and TV Marti have failed to make any discernable inroads into Cuban society or to influence the Cuban Government. This failure has led to recent congressional action to reduce funding for TV Marti. In the FY 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Bill, the Senate approved a measure to strip TV Marti of approximately \$4 million in funding, in addition to a reduction requested by the President, and it ordered the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), the entity that runs Radio and TV Marti, to spend not more than \$5.5 million for items other than salaries and benefits, a move that would effectively end funding for the airplane that TV Marti uses for much of its broadcasting. This is not the first congressional attempt to strip Radio and TV Marti of funding. Previous attempts have been for reasons that have remained consistent over time. They include:

The most commonly heard complaint is that OCB has failed to adhere to generally accepted journalistic standards. Both internal and external investigations have criticized OCB for broadcasting unsubstantiated reports from Cuba as legitimate news stories, for using offensive and incendiary language in news broadcasts, and for a lack of timeliness in news reporting.

While there are no nationally representative data, most available research indicates that Radio and TV Marti's audiences are miniscule. U.S. Government-sponsored research groups indicate that Radio Marti has a listenership of less than 2 percent of Cubans, and claims that TV Marti has any stable viewership are suspect. Most observers attribute these low levels to pervasive Cuban Government

jamming of Radio and TV Marti broadcasts. But interviews with recently arrived Cuban immigrants show that among those who were familiar with the broadcasts, only a small minority thought they were “objective.”

The Cuban Government employs an extensive jamming system against Radio Marti transmissions on both short-wave and medium wave. OCB officials concede that the jamming is largely successful, with only areas outside metropolitan Havana able to receive Radio Marti’s signal. TV Marti’s “over the air” broadcasts are similarly jammed.

OCB also must deal with competition from domestic Cuban radio and television stations. In recent surveys, more than 90 percent of Cuban respondents said they listened to Cuban radio stations and watched Cuban television stations. OCB officials concede that the quality of Cuban programming has improved recently, with local television carrying U.S. programs like “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Friends,” and “The Sopranos.” Cuban TV also carries CNN en Español, which many Cubans watch for world news.

Finally, allegations of cronyism and malfeasance continue to haunt OCB. Critics maintain that many senior-level OCB officials were granted their positions because of their personal connections within OCB, rather than because of specific qualifications for the job. For example, the director of the Voice of America’s Latin American service is a nephew of the OCB director and is himself a former OCB official. Furthermore, in 2007, the former director of programming for TV Marti pleaded guilty to receiving nearly \$112,000 in kickbacks from a vendor contracted by OCB. These allegations of nepotism and corruption have harmed morale and led to questions about management’s transparency.

There are several things that OCB can do to improve programming, operations, and morale. OCB’s parent organization already has mandated closer cooperation between OCB and the Voice of America. This cooperation brings OCB and VOA broadcasters together to coproduce news programs and a regular half-hour radio show called “A Fondo,” or “In Depth,” which provides news and analysis. Unfortunately, however, the moves have been from VOA to OCB, rather than vice versa.

OCB’s parent organization should consider moving OCB to Washington and subordinating it into the Voice of America. This could help ensure that programming is up to VOA standards. In the meantime, OCB should “return to basics” to clean up its operation. It must attract quality talent from outside Miami, implement quality editorial standards, and attract quality management. Hiring and training must be overhauled to ensure a de-politicized and professional workforce.

OCB should focus on quality programming, which will cause interested Cubans to seek out available broadcasts, whether over the air, or, if their access to technology permits, via satellite and the internet.

OCB's parent organization should enhance guidance, training, and oversight for analysts performing OCB program reviews, and provide regular, ongoing, and comprehensive training to OCB staff regarding journalistic standards.

To address chronic management issues, it is important to have processes in place to enable the efficient and effective operation of OCB. Finally, to improve morale within the organization, OCB management should take steps to address persistent concerns with its communication and interaction with OCB staff.

1. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Government began broadcasting Radio Marti to Cuba in 1985 and added television broadcasts with TV Marti in 1990. The goals of Radio and TV Marti are, according to the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB),¹ to 1) support the right of the Cuban people to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers; 2) to be effective in furthering the open communication of information and ideas through the use of radio and television broadcasting to Cuba; 3) to serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of accurate, objective, and comprehensive news; and 4) to provide news, commentary, and other information about events in Cuba and elsewhere to promote the cause of freedom in Cuba.

2. BACKGROUND

In 1983, Congress passed the Radio Broadcasting to Cuba Act to provide the people of Cuba, through Radio Marti, with information they ordinarily would not receive due to the censorship practices of the Cuban Government. Subsequently, in 1990, TV Marti began television broadcasts to Cuba.

Until October 1999, U.S. Government-funded international broadcasting programs had been a primary function of the United States Information Agency (USIA). When USIA was abolished and its public diplomacy functions were merged with the Department of State at the beginning of FY 2000, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) became an independent agency to oversee such entities as the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia, and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), which manages Radio and TV Marti. OCB is headquartered in Miami. Legislation in the 104th Congress required the relocation of OCB from Washington to south Florida so that Radio and TV Marti could be more easily immersed in Miami's Cuban community. The move began in 1996 and was completed in 1998.

In October 2003, President George W. Bush established the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba (CAFC) to identify measures to accelerate an end to the Castro government and to support U.S. programs that could assist in an ensuing transition. This commission published two interagency policy frameworks which identified measures to 1) empower Cuban civil society; 2) break the Cuban

¹The International Broadcasting Bureau oversees VOA and OCB and provides transmission services, administration, and marketing for all broadcasters that fall under the jurisdiction of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. These include Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti, Radio Sawa, and Alhurra Television. See the Appendix for an organizational chart of the IBB structure.

Government's "information blockade"; 3) deny resources to the Cuban Government; 4) "illuminate the reality of Castro's Cuba"; 5) encourage international efforts to support Cuban civil society; and 6) undermine the regime's "succession strategy." In addition, State Department and OCB officials indicated that Radio and TV Marti could be important platforms for providing information to Cubans during any future government transition.

OCB's stated mission is to broadcast to Cuba the sorts of Spanish-language programming available in an open society. In 2004, Radio Marti changed its programming from entertainment and news to an all-news format, and currently broadcasts news and information programming 6 days a week, 24 hours per day, and for 18 hours on Sunday. Radio Marti's daily programming consists of 70 percent live news broadcasts and 30 percent recorded programming. TV Marti broadcasts 2 live newscasts, sports and entertainment, and special programming 24 hours per day.

In October 2006, OCB launched AeroMarti to expand availability of TV Marti broadcasts in Cuba. AeroMarti consists of two Gulfstream propeller airplanes that OCB leases to broadcast television signals to Cuba from U.S. airspace off the coast of Florida. In December 2006, IBB leased airtime on TV Azteca, a commercial television station in Miami that is carried on the DirecTV satellite system, which is available to Cubans with a satellite card, although this is illegal in Cuba.

Due in large part to the launch of AeroMarti, much of OCB's FY 2008 \$15.158 million budget for transmission costs is spent on TV Marti. In FY 2008, OCB spent over \$6 million on AeroMarti, which included about \$5 million for fuel, operation, and maintenance of the airplanes and about \$1 million to equip one airplane with the ability to broadcast on VHF channel 13.

3. OPPOSITION IN CONGRESS PERSISTS

Radio and TV Marti have received negligible support from among the Cuban people and have had almost no impact on Cuban Government behavior and policy. As a result, Congress has made several attempts over the years to cut funding for the programs, especially for TV Marti. In addition to the programs' ineffectiveness, in December 2006, press reports alleged significant problems in OCB's operations, with claims of cronyism, patronage, and bias in its coverage, issues that attracted further attention in Congress.

Concerns about TV Marti continue to run so deep that in July 2009 the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a provision by Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) in the FY 2010 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations bill to further tighten funding for TV Marti. In its final version, the amendment cut approximately \$4 million in funding in addition to the reduced appropriation requested by the President, and it ordered OCB to spend not more than \$5.5 million for items other than salaries and benefits. The intent was to end funding for AeroMarti. OCB officials maintain that the budget reduction will be devastating to both TV Marti and Radio Marti because many OCB employees are "dual-hatted" and would have to be let go in the absence of adequate funding for AeroMarti.

OCB officials maintain that total FY 2010 costs for TV Marti are \$12,025,910. They complain that they already must eliminate 35 positions and \$4.2 million as mandated in the FY 2010 budget request; a further \$4 million cut, as called for by the Dorgan Amendment, would require deep cuts beyond TV Marti. OCB officials argue that even if all of TV Marti's 32 remaining employees are eliminated, this would achieve an additional savings of only about \$1.3 million.

4. PROBLEMS BEGAN ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER CREATION

From their inception, Radio and TV Marti have had several difficult problems, including a lax adherence to generally accepted journalistic standards, reports of small audience size, and Cuban Government jamming of broadcast signals.

Adhering to Journalistic Standards

OCB's failure over many years to adhere to generally accepted journalistic standards remains its most significant problem, and the grounds for most criticism leveled against it. These failures have been documented in the press, in a January 2009 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and in IBB's own internal evaluations.

The 2009 GAO report—the most recent of several—criticized OCB for failing to maintain appropriate journalistic standards. In response, IBB and OCB took several steps to improve operations and to help ensure that U.S. broadcasting to Cuba adheres to domestic and international broadcasting laws, agreements, and standards. It is too soon to assess whether these moves will have a significant impact over time. OCB has attempted a succession of such initiatives over the past 20 years with mixed results.

The Radio Broadcasting to Cuba Act and the TV Broadcasting to Cuba Act require Radio and TV Marti to adhere to VOA journalistic standards to ensure that their programming is accurate, balanced, and objective. While IBB officials report that the quality of OCB programming has “improved slightly” in recent years, IBB's internal, as well as external, reviews identified continuing problems with OCB broadcasters' adherence to journalistic standards, particularly in the area of balance and objectivity. IBB program analysts' reviews from 2003 through 2008 repeatedly cite specific problems with the broadcasts, such as the presentation of individual views as news, editorializing, and the use of inappropriate guests whose viewpoints represented a narrow segment of opinion. IBB reviews of Radio and TV Marti's content identified other problems, including placement of unsubstantiated reports coming from Cuba with news stories that had been verified by at least two reputable sources; the use of offensive and incendiary language in broadcasts, which is explicitly prohibited by OCB's editorial guidelines; and a lack of timeliness in news and current affairs reporting.

External reviews of Radio and TV Marti's broadcast content also identified problems regarding balance and objectivity. For example, the results of IBB monitoring panels from 2003 through 2007 showed that the majority (9 of 13) of expert control listeners and viewers expressed concerns about the broadcasts' balance and ob-

jectivity. In addition, an OCB-commissioned survey of recent Cuban arrivals in 2007 showed that only 38 percent felt that TV Marti programming was “objective,” and only 29 percent of respondents believed that Radio Marti’s news was “objective.”

To help improve adherence to journalistic standards, in 2007, the director of OCB issued a memorandum to managers requiring them to certify that they have provided employees and contractors with a copy of both OCB’s editorial guidelines and the VOA Charter. In interviews with committee staff, OCB management did not identify any follow-up. If this “certification” has occurred, evidence that it has improved performance still is unavailable.

OCB says it has taken recent steps to improve training for its employees. OCB selected a staff person to serve as a training coordinator and established a designated space for training classes. However, BBG’s Manual of Administration establishes additional responsibilities for providing training that OCB has not yet fulfilled. For example, while the manual requires managers to review employees’ training needs annually, OCB officials reported that they have made no recent efforts to do so, citing budget limitations. In FY 2009, however, OCB received funding for training in journalistic standards.

OCB also has failed to implement some IBB program review recommendations. For example, IBB action plans from 2003 through 2008 recommended that OCB: 1) separate news from opinion in broadcasts; 2) ensure balanced and comprehensive selection of viewpoints; 3) avoid sweeping generalizations and editorializing; 4) use guests who are informed on program topics; and 5) separate unsubstantiated reports from Cuba from newscasts.

Rather than move OCB under VOA, the two organizations have implemented a modest co-location plan, whereby VOA Latin America broadcasters have begun working from a dedicated studio in OCB. This arrangement enables—but does not require—them to work with and advise OCB broadcasters, and has created an optic of main VOA dependence on, and implicit subordination to, a surrogate radio with serious quality control issues. It is unclear at this stage what the overall mission of the co-located group will be, who will work for whom, and what authority, if any, VOA will have over Radio and TV Marti broadcasts. So far, OCB and VOA have begun co-producing a half-hour program called “A Fondo,” or “In Depth,” which provides news and analysis on the Western hemisphere. Unfortunately, however, the fact that OCB will remain in Miami undercuts efforts to broaden the organization’s political scope outside southern Florida and to ensure that programming is up to worldwide VOA standards.

IBB’s efforts to oversee OCB take three main forms, but all have been largely unsuccessful. First, OCB participates in a daily editorial meeting at the manager level with VOA and IBB staff to discuss what news stories each entity will be covering that day. According to IBB’s deputy director, participation in such meetings is supposed to help coordinate entities’ coverage of stories and ensure that each entity is covering all relevant news events. Second, as previously noted, IBB performs annual program reviews of Radio and TV Marti. IBB’s deputy director said that the program review process is intended to provide quality control by objectively evalu-

ating OCB's broadcasting services once a year and recommending improvements in their broadcasting. But this is only once a year, and it has little effect on Radio and TV Marti's day-to-day programming. Third, IBB participates in and oversees OCB's handling of strategic issues, such as using an aircraft to broadcast TV Marti's programming.

Audience Size

Radio and TV Marti have struggled with reports of small audience size since their creation. While there are no nationally representative data, and some surveys indicate a larger potential audience, most available research suggests that Radio and TV Marti's audience is small, due in large part to signal jamming by the Cuban Government.

To measure audience size, IBB periodically commissions international telephone surveys, conducted primarily from Costa Rica. IBB also empanels focus groups in Miami made up of recent Cuban arrivals to the United States to solicit their feedback on the content and production quality of OCB programming and to obtain information about their radio and television use, preferences, and experiences in Cuba. These panels appear to be duplicative, in that OCB also contracts with a local Miami market research firm that conducts monitoring panels once a month and conducts surveys twice a year to solicit recent Cuban arrivals' feedback on the quality of TV Marti programming and to obtain information about their media habits and perceptions of programming. Many Cuba watchers doubt the reliability of recent arrivals from Cuba, fearing that they tell interviewers what they want to hear. In addition, many recent arrivals report having watched TV Marti, only to clarify that they saw it in the U.S. Interests Section in Havana while awaiting a visa.

Fewer than 2 percent of respondents to telephone surveys since 2003 reported tuning in to Radio or TV Marti during the past week, but some observers claim the telephone interview methodology is flawed. In a recent interview, the pollster said that telephone interviewers almost immediately were confronted with hostile respondents, who thought that the interviewers were working on behalf of the Cuban Government and were trying to trick them into admitting that they listened to Radio and TV Marti, which would incriminate citizens as government opponents. Many respondents answered the pollsters' questions by saying that, of course they did not listen to Radio Marti or watch TV Marti, and to tell Cuban authorities that their utilities were in need of repair, there was not enough food available in the marketplace, or that the local hospital lacked supplies.

Despite the problems associated with telephone surveys conducted from outside Cuba, they still are among the only cost-effective methods of estimating audience size for Radio and TV Marti.² The surveys indicate that fewer than 2 percent of respondents in 2003, 2005, and 2006 said they listened to Radio Marti during the

²It is possible to place signal strength meters on U.S. Coast Guard ships circling Cuba in international waters to determine if the signal is getting through, but this would cost more than \$100,000—money that is not included in OCB's budget, according to IBB and OCB officials.

previous week. In 2008, fewer than 1 percent of respondents said they listened to Radio Marti during the previous week.

Additional IBB audience research indicates that TV Marti's audience size also is minute. All of IBB's telephone surveys since 2003 show that fewer than 1 percent of respondents said they watched TV Marti during the previous week. Notably, results from the 2006 and 2008 telephone surveys show no increase in reported TV Marti viewership following the launch of AeroMarti and DirecTV broadcasting in 2006.

OCB officials maintain that other information suggests that Radio and TV Marti may have a larger audience in Cuba. For example, a 2007 survey that OCB commissioned to obtain information on programming preferences and media habits also contained data on Radio and TV Marti's audience size. This nonrandom survey of 382 Cubans who had recently arrived in the United States found that 45 percent of respondents reported listening to Radio Marti and that 21 percent reported watching TV Marti within the last six months before leaving Cuba. However, these results may not represent the actual size of Radio and TV Marti's audience because 1) according to BBG officials, higher viewing and listening rates are expected among recent arrivals, and 2) the demographic characteristics of the respondents to this survey did not reflect the broader Cuban population.

Anecdotal reports confirm that Radio Marti broadcasts have reached significant audiences over the years in response to specific events. OCB claimed that Radio Marti's coverage of Hurricane Ike, which struck Cuba in September 2008, was widely heard there, with callers from all over the island providing updated information on the situation to OCB. And in interviews with the Associated Press, more than two dozen Cuban immigrants to Florida contended that Radio Marti could be heard throughout Cuba in the days following the hurricane.

In June 2009, OCB commissioned Spanish Radio Productions (SRP) of Coral Gables, FL to carry out a study among recently arrived Cuban immigrants to determine their radio listening and television viewing habits during their last six months in Cuba.³ SRP found that among 390 people interviewed, when asked what "foreign radio stations" they listened to, 32 percent volunteered that they had listened to Radio Marti. Slightly more than half of those added that they stopped listening to Radio Marti because Cuban Government jamming made reception difficult. When asked what "foreign television stations" they had watched during their last six months in Cuba, 4 percent said they had watched TV Marti. Of those who reported viewing TV Marti, 75 percent had seen it on VHF Channel 13, 41.7 percent said they had seen it on DVD or video cassette, and 8.3 percent said they had seen it via DirecTV. These survey figures, if true, are deceptive. Extrapolated to the whole Cuban population, 3 percent have seen TV Marti on Channel 13, 1.7 percent have seen it on DVD or video, and only 0.3 percent on DirecTV.

³Survey Conducted for the Office of Cuba Broadcasting Among Recently Arrived Cubans: Preliminary Report, Requisition Number IQ 1088-09-IQ 005, Solicitation Number QS-BBG50-R-09-0001, June 12, 2009.

The problems with this survey are twofold. First, the methodology is not a scientific, random sample, but a group of recently arrived immigrants, who likely are, by definition, anti-regime. Second, there is no accounting for where these immigrants listened to Radio Marti or viewed TV Marti. For example, both are offered in the U.S. Interests Section, where the immigrants had to go to acquire visas for their travel to the United States.

Higher listenership and viewership numbers are plausible, as evidenced by Lockheed Martin, a TV Marti contractor, and by the Cuban Government itself, both of which have offered evidence that TV Marti is potentially available across wide swaths of the country as a “Grade A” broadcast signal.

At OCB’s request, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics’ Advanced Development Programs developed analytical models of the AeroMarti UHF Channel 20 and VHF Channel 13 broadcast systems, Cuban local TV transmitters operating on Channels 20 and 13, and Cuban jamming transmitters based in Havana.⁴ These computer models were employed in an advanced broadcast simulation environment and used to develop an engineering assessment of the effectiveness of the AeroMarti airborne broadcast system. Broadcast performance was evaluated both in an environment of co-channel interference from neighboring Cuban TV stations and when Havana-based jamming is active.

According to Lockheed Martin’s model, TV Marti’s Channel 20 broadcast signal potentially extends over 21.1 percent of the main island of Cuba (outside Havana) during jamming while broadcasting along the Matanzas flight profile.⁵ The AeroMarti Channel 13 broadcast model indicates potential coverage over 22.7 percent of the island from the same flight profile, an increase of 322 sq km from the UHF model’s coverage.⁶

Lockheed Martin’s simulations suggest high TV Marti signal levels are greater than jamming noise and noise from co-channel broadcasts. That is, in the simulations, viewers could see TV Marti broadcast signals even with jamming. Clear broadcast reception is projected over wide areas during these events with significant signal coverage over a portion of the Cuban mainland along the northern coastal regions and outside of Havana. The studies do not explain, however, why all eyewitness accounts and polls show much lower TV Marti viewership.

In June 2007, the Cuban Government claimed a similar theoretical signal strength (i.e., when not jamming) when it filed a formal complaint with the International Telecommunications Union.⁷ In its complaint, the Cuban Government specified the on-ground

⁴ Modeling of the AeroMarti UHF Channel 20 and VHF Channel 13 broadcast system performance was developed using Analytical Graphics, Inc.’s Satellite Tool Kit analytic software package, which enables the user to model the dynamic link performance of a communications system, as well as the intervisibility among objects in a 3-D geometric model. The STK/Communication module was used to model the desired (TV Marti) and undesired (jamming and noise) signal levels at the receiver and the effects of atmospheric propagation on signal strengths.

⁵ The Matanzas flight profile is the practice of pointing the aircraft’s broadcast antenna toward the city of Matanzas, Cuba. OCB technicians say that this allows broader potential viewership coverage, and less jamming interference, than would directing the signal at Havana.

⁶ AeroMarti Broadcast Effectiveness Analysis, Contract Number BBG45-P-08-0008, Data Item Number A002, Document Number PMF-01382, 27 August 2008, by Lockheed Martin Corporation, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company.

⁷ Complaint filed with the FCC and the ITU on June 25, 2007 by the Cuban “Agencia de Control y Supervision-MIC.”

measured signal strength of the AeroMarti broadcast to be within the range of 64dB μ –74dB μ . This measured performance by the Cuban Government corroborates test measurements performed by Lockheed Martin on the AeroMarti aircraft in 2006 and 2007, prior to formal acceptance of the airborne broadcast systems by OCB. It is also consistent with the “FCC Grade A” signal strength specified in the Lockheed Martin model and in its contract with OCB.

Cuban Government Jamming

IBB and OCB have studied the extent and impact of jamming, but they still lack data on the number, type, and overall effectiveness of the jammers. Nonetheless, IBB, OCB, and Lockheed Martin feel confident with their conclusions on Cuba’s jamming practices.

The Cuban Government jams Radio Marti’s shortwave signals and interferes with Radio Marti’s AM signals by counter-broadcasting at a higher power level on the same frequency. OCB tries to overcome jamming of its shortwave signals by alternating among 10 different frequencies throughout the day.⁸ To overcome Cuban Government counter-broadcasting of its AM broadcasts, OCB increases signal power during daylight hours. According to OCB, the Cuban Government’s counter-broadcasting is largely effective in and around Havana and several other large cities, but probably has little impact outside those areas.

OCB reports that jamming affects all Radio Marti shortwave transmissions at all hours. It is more intense around Havana, but shortwave reception in eastern parts of Cuba is often strong. There are significant areas of the island, outside Havana, where medium wave jamming is not a significant obstacle to listening.

Lockheed Martin believes, based on identification of high points, that Cuba’s fixed jammers are located on the four tallest buildings in Havana. They are likely atop the FOCSA Building (400 feet), the Bacardi Building (150 feet), Revolution Tower (350 feet), and Capitolio (300 feet). OCB also claims that mobile jammers are mounted on trucks and boats and in airplanes so that they can be moved around the island as necessary; we are unable to corroborate that assertion. All of the fixed jammers were damaged by Hurricane Ike in September 2008, but were pressed back into duty a year later.

Cuban Government jamming of TV Marti transmissions from AeroMarti is intense in metropolitan Havana, but OCB has no evidence of jamming of either Radio or TV Marti transmissions from the HISPASAT satellites. HISPASAT is a group of Spanish communications satellites that carry Spanish and Latin American television programming. It is available across northern Latin America and throughout Cuba. There is no jamming of TV Marti transmissions from DirecTV, which carries other Spanish-language stations from Miami and covers the western portion of Cuba.

Recently arrived Cubans who participated in an IBB-commissioned focus group reported that signal jamming of TV Marti’s over-the-air broadcast via AeroMarti made it difficult for them to view TV Marti. Officials of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana

⁸We are unable to determine how the frequency changes affect listeners’ ability to tune in.

also said that Cuban Government jamming of AeroMarti usually prevented them from viewing over-the-air TV Marti broadcasts.

Interestingly, OCB engineers claim that there is no Cuban jamming at all during baseball games broadcast on TV Marti on Friday and Sunday evenings during baseball season. In a December 2007 SRP survey, which interviewed 382 recently arrived Cuban immigrants, 21 percent reported watching TV Marti in Cuba during the past six months, and 81 percent said that baseball was a “very important” or “important” programming feature.

5. OCB MANAGEMENT ALSO DEALING WITH OTHER PROBLEMS

Besides congressional opposition, journalistic standards, audience size, and jamming, OCB management has had to deal with several other serious problems in the recent past. Competition from domestic Cuban radio and television stations, for example, has forced OCB to continually update its format, an action that can be confusing to some listeners and viewers. In interviews with committee staff, OCB’s director emphasized that the competitive media environment in Cuba is a key challenge for OCB in attracting and maintaining an audience for Radio and TV Marti. Indeed, OCB management was concerned enough about its “brand” in Cuba that it changed the Radio Marti and TV Marti logo in 2009.

Meanwhile, time, progress, and the internet may be doing what Radio and TV Marti have not been able to do in Cuba. In 2008, more than 90 percent of telephone survey respondents said they watched Cuba’s national television broadcasts during the past week. IBB and OCB officials said that the quality of Cuban television programming has improved and now includes popular U.S. programming, such as “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Friends,” and “The Sopranos.” In addition, about 30 percent of respondents in recent polls said they watched CNN en Español, which is carried on Cuban television, during the past week. This clearly is a challenge for TV Marti, which arguably has had limited success in opening Cuban society to uncensored news from around the world. The presence of CNN on Cuban television—and its apparent popularity among Cubans—appears to undercut the need for an alternative news source such as TV Marti.

Accusations of cronyism also continue to dog OCB management. Critics maintain that many senior-level OCB employees were granted their positions because of their personal connections within OCB, rather than because of any specific qualifications they may have had for the job. For example, the director of VOA Latin America is a nephew of OCB’s director and is also a former OCB official. These critics assert that whether “connected” employees have succeeded in their positions is irrelevant. The fact that they obtained their jobs in a non-competitive manner is enough to harm morale and to lead to questions about management’s transparency.

OCB’s presence in Miami also is another potential oversight problem. BBG and IBB management, both in Washington, said that OCB’s Miami locale did not inhibit their efforts to oversee it. They noted that they were in regular telephone and email contact with OCB management. They also claimed that the monthly BBG board meetings (one of which is held in Miami each year) offered sufficient personal contact with OCB management. Some OCB em-

ployees, however, expressed concern to GAO over what they perceived as a lack of oversight by BBG and IBB. One employee commented that OCB seemed to be “out of sight and out of the minds” of BBG and IBB. Other employees told committee staff that they did not feel like they were part of “the BBG family” because of the physical distance between BBG and IBB management and OCB.

Finally, OCB has even had to deal with criminal behavior in the workplace. In February 2007, the former director of TV Marti programming, along with a relative of a member of Congress, pleaded guilty in U.S. federal court to receiving nearly \$112,000 in kickbacks over a three-year period from a vendor receiving OCB contracts. The former OCB employee, Jose Miranda, was sentenced to 27 months in prison and fined \$5,000 after being found guilty of taking as much as 50 percent of all monies paid by TV Marti for the production of television programming by vendor Perfect Image. The court found that Miranda personally accepted 73 separate checks from Perfect Image from late 2001 through 2004. He also pleaded guilty to income tax evasion in the scheme.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

First and foremost, IBB should move OCB back to Washington and integrate it fully into VOA. OCB cooperation with VOA in Miami is fine for purposes of occasional joint programming and editorial review, but OCB’s problems are deeper than that and require integration between the two organizations under tighter IBB control. Creating a VOA-Marti service within VOA could resolve several serious problems: It would help ensure that programming, particularly news quality, meets VOA standards. It would bring OCB, VOA, and IBB management teams together permanently, allowing them to share best practices. And the creation of a Cuba/Marti service within VOA would more firmly establish the Marti brand in Cuba, and, by raising standards, help build OCB’s audience.

OCB must “return to basics” to clean up its operation. It must attract quality talent from outside Miami, implement quality editorial standards, and attract quality management. Hiring and training must be overhauled to ensure a de-politicized and professional workforce.

OCB should spend less on measuring audience size, especially surveys by self-interested contractors, and focus more on quality programming. It is that quality programming that will cause interested Cubans to seek out available broadcasts, whether over the air, or, if their access to technology permits, via satellite and the internet.

IBB should take several immediate actions to comply with recommendations raised by GAO’s report. First, GAO recommended that BBG take the following two steps: 1) to conduct an analysis of the relative success and return on investment of broadcasting to Cuba, showing the cost, nature of the audience, and challenges—such as jamming and competition—related to each of OCB’s transmission methods. The analysis should also include comprehensive information regarding the media environment in Cuba to better understand the extent to which OCB broadcasts are attractive to Cubans; and 2) to coordinate the sharing of information among U.S. agencies and grantees regarding the audience research relating to

Radio and TV Marti. We agree fully with these recommendations. OCB cannot fully serve its intended audience without understanding its operating environment, its competition, and its audience's wishes.

In addition, we believe that IBB must: 1) enhance guidance, training, and oversight for analysts performing program reviews; 2) provide regular, ongoing, and comprehensive training to OCB staff regarding journalistic standards; and 3) develop guidance and take steps to ensure that political and other inappropriate advertisements are not shown during OCB broadcasts.

To address chronic management issues, it is important to have processes in place to enable the efficient and effective operation of OCB. Finally, to improve morale within the organization, OCB management should take steps to address persistent concerns with its communication and interaction with OCB staff.

How Radio and TV Marti Broadcast

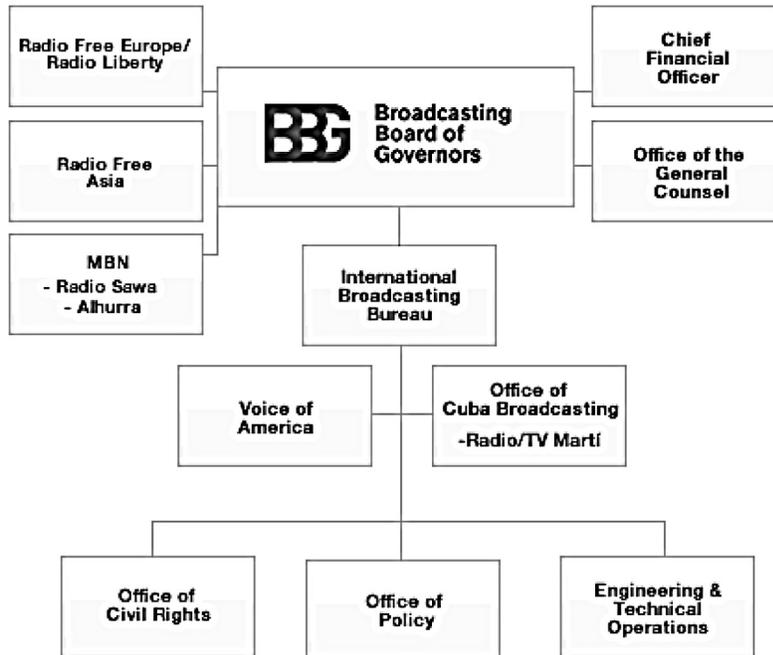
OCB uses a number of different platforms. Radio broadcasts through shortwave and medium wave, satellite, and the internet; television broadcasts by satellite, the internet, and "over the air" via an airplane. Shortwave transmissions utilize a transmitter station in Greenville, NC and broadcast on 10 frequencies and are available 24 hours a day. Medium wave is broadcast from a transmitter station in Marathon, FL and is also available 24 hours a day. Fixed and mobile jammers are used for at least a part of the day against all shortwave and medium wave broadcasts, although the Cuban government does not jam every broadcast.

Both Radio Marti and TV Marti broadcast on the HISPASAT direct-to-home satellite system from OCB's headquarters in Miami. TV Azteca, a Miami-based direct-to-home satellite system, carries TV Marti to the northern one-third of Cuba, including Havana, via a DirecTV card. The cards are available to Cubans who have relatives outside the country and who can procure them abroad and deliver them to family inside Cuba. Cubans can then splice the wires from the receiver to different televisions in a house or apartment building. OCB claims that there is anecdotal evidence that this is happening around Cuba, allowing as many as 14 televisions in 14 different apartments to have satellite access, although all have to be tuned to the same channel. According to press reports citing a Cuban government official, the Cuban government has cracked down on this illegal satellite reception, arguing that TV Marti and other Miami-based Spanish-language programming was "destabilizing and interventionist and aimed at destroying the revolution."

OCB began broadcasting TV Marti via AeroMarti, two Gulfstream twin-engine turboprop aircraft modified to transmit a television signal from the air, in 2006. AeroMarti broadcasts TV Marti programming five hours a day, six days a week, along the Matanzas flight profile. AeroMarti, which is operated under contract by Lockheed Martin, is obligated by OCB to provide FCC "Grade A" broadcasts on UHF Channel 30 and VHF Channel 13.

APPENDIX

Broadcasting Board of Governors Organizational Chart



○