

The Broadcasting Board of Governors is an independent federal agency supervising all US government-funded civilian international broadcasting whose mission is:

To promote freedom and democracy and to enhance understanding through multimedia communication of accurate, objective and balanced news, information and other programming about America and the

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Implementation Strategies at Work

BBG Highlights is a publication of the Broadcasting Board of Governors Public Affairs Office. For more information, please contact Jessica Stahl, Office of Public Affairs. Phone: 202-203-4400; E-mail: jstahl@bbg.gov

BBG HIGHLIGHTS

Strategic Goals, Challenges, and Accomplishments Around the BBG

August/September 2009



Above: A VOA billboard hangs in Afghanistan in advance of the country's presidential election. RFE/RL and VOA provided extensive coverage to Afghans throughout the campaign, voting, and following weeks.

Below: Rabiya Kadeer, the World Uyghur Council president who was blamed by China for inciting riots, speaks with RFA.

BBG Reporting Helps Audiences Understand Summer's Events

BBG broadcasters provide extensive coverage of major elections and crises

This summer brought contentious elections, ethnic clashes and political upheaval, and BBG broadcasters helped their audiences understand and navigate the unfolding events. The past few months have seen a coup in Honduras, elections and deadly attacks in Indonesia, and violence in Uganda, among other major events.

Three of the biggest stories were the ongoing reaction to Iran's presidential election and aftermath, July's riots in Xinjiang province, China, which pitted ethnic Uyghurs against Han Chinese, and the August presidential elections in Afghanistan, which continue to reverberate with charges of election fraud.

Iran

VOA's Persian News Network produced a half-hour TV documentary on the campaigns and election fallout, drawing on citizen journalist videos sent to VOA. The documentary was aired as part of an hour-long call-in show, and made available for download online.

Reporting has also continued on post-election developments, including the inauguration of President Ahmadinejad, the trials of protesters, the crackdown by authorities on reformists and reformist publications, and the



Iranian voters demonstrate in support of Mir-Hossein Mousavi in June. (RFE/RL)

comments of U.S. and other officials on events in Iran.

On August 17, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reported that demonstrators had assembled outside the offices of the newspaper *National Trust*, which had been recently shut down by the government, and were chanting "Death to the dictator!" when security forces beat and dispersed the crowd with batons.

The mother of Neda Agha Soltan, who became a symbol of the opposition movement when the video of her death circulated online, spoke with both Radio Farda and the Persian News Network. Both

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Briefs

Transmission Updates

RFE/RL now has a weekday broadcast on Ukraine's nationally syndicated ProMin network. In addition, top-10 rated Melodiya network is broadcasting the Service's morning show, Saturday interview program and other short reports.

RFE/RL Kyrgyz's popular weekly TV shows, *Azattyk+* and *Inconvenient Questions*, are now back on the air, having been off since October 2008 due to government actions.

VOA Mandarin began broadcasting 24/7 via satellite radio with live news and repeats of programming to circumvent the Chinese government shortwave jamming.

Also launched in August was a daily one-hour broadcast of English-language lessons and American music on a South Korean AM station whose signal reaches through Shanghai and central China.

As of July 20, VOA Swahili is offering headlines and breaking news via SMS to listeners in Kenya. The Swahili Service is also offering audio and video clips to cell phone users in East and Central Africa.

VOA Indonesian TV feeds will be placed on Indonesian Web sites including www.republika.co.id, which has signed up to use *Islam in America* and other Islam-related programs.

Other new affiliates include: Kaya FM in Kenya, Gabz FM in Botswana and Tshwane TV in South Africa for VOA, and Radio Stari Grad and Radio Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina for RFE/RL.

New Programming

VOA's Thai Service recently completed several call-in TV interactives with TNN24, a cable television station in Bangkok. The first two topics of *Inside Washington with VOA Thai* were North Korea and US health care reform.

services have also interviewed other victims of the violence. Zahra Nik-Peyma, the mother of Ashkan Sohrabi, a 20-year-old university student who was fatally shot by a sniper, told PNN the family was able to recover her son's body only with great difficulty but was barred — like the other families of those killed — from holding a public funeral.

China

When deadly riots erupted on July 5 in China's Uyghur autonomous province, Chinese authorities moved quickly to take control of media reporting and to limit coverage that would highlight Uyghur grievances, according to an investigative report by RFA's Peter Zhong. But VOA and RFA offered extensive on-the-ground coverage, as well as interviews with experts and members of other Uyghur communities, to provide those in China and around the world with an accurate picture of the ongoing situation.

RFA's Uyghur, Mandarin, Cantonese and Tibetan services worked together to provide reports from all over China. The services broadcast daily, in-depth coverage of the situation, including breaking the story of the disappearance of an outspoken Uyghur economist, Ilhan Totsi. RFA's eyewitness coverage was cited by major international news sources like the AP and *Wall Street Journal*.



Armed police move into Urumqi in transport trucks on July 8. (RFA Cantonese/Hailan)

The president of the World Uyghur Congress, Rabiya Kadeer, who has been in exile in the US since 2005 was accused by Beijing of instigating the riots, talked to VOA Uzbek about the violence in an interview that was simultaneously translated to Turkish and broadcast live on VOA affiliate TGRT during the evening newscast. Mrs. Kadeer told VOA, "If the world paid as much attention to the repression in China's Xinjiang province as it paid to the situations in Darfur and Tibet, China would not repeat this type of

violence." RFA also provided daily coverage of Ms. Kadeer's visit to Japan.

Afghanistan

In advance of and during the August 20 Afghan elections, RFE/RL and VOA brought the Afghan people expert analysis, profiles of the many candidates, and reports on local sentiment from all over the country.



(Left to right) Ramzan Bashardost, Ashraf Ghani and Hamid Karzai participate in a debate co-sponsored by RFE/RL.

RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan hosted a [presidential debate](#), the only one in which incumbent president and favored candidate Hamid Karzai participated. Radio Free Afghanistan Director Akbar Ayazi served as the moderator for the debate, which was broadcast live via radio and via Afghan state TV. Other programming included short interviews with all 41 presidential candidates and call-in shows during which candidates took audience questions.

"Never before have Afghans seen an incumbent president challenged by his opponents on live television and radio," said Ayazi. "Today was a great day for Afghan democracy."

Both VOA and RFE/RL broadcast live and on location during the elections, and were among the first to provide reports of voter intimidation and technical glitches at some polling places. VOA's coverage also included noteworthy interviews with Senator John Kerry and Ambassador Richard Holbrooke.

Interest in the elections was high in surrounding regions as well. VOA's Persian News Network and MBN's Alhurra TV sent reporters to Kabul to provide live updates for their TV viewers, and VOA's managing editor for Pashto-language broadcasts provided a [daily blog in English](#) for the worldwide online audience. ■

As Web Censorship Technology Advances, So Do Circumvention Methods

Success and innovation at the BBG's anti-censorship team

The BBG's Internet anticensorship efforts have been receiving attention this summer, both for their utility and their innovation. With tried-and-true methods like the proxies that helped Iranians access the Web during and after their presidential election, and developmental projects like Feed Over E-mail (FOE), the anticensorship team is charged with getting news and information to some of the most closed-off regions of the world.

When VOA and RFA e-mails and Web sites were first blocked in China, a program was begun to send daily e-mail news summaries that bypassed filters by appearing to come from benign sources. The e-mails contained modified key words to bypass filtering, and proxy links that would allow users to access VOA and RFA Web sites. E-mail newsletters and Web proxies have since proven successful in other countries, such as Iran.

The increase in censorship surrounding Iran's June elections highlighted the importance of a non-Web-based proxy implemented by the anticensorship team called Freegate. Freegate is client-side software that permits users to have direct, uncensored Internet access without having to go through the ever-changing proxies.

The software proved so popular in the weeks following the elections that the IBB had to negotiate increased server capacity to accommodate the traffic.

Other anticensorship methods have also been tried by the anticensorship team and others, such as using SMS to send news, multimedia content and proxy information. An SMS news delivery service proved valuable during Zimbabwe's 2008 presidential election, receiving more than 15,000 subscribers for VOA news updates.

The newest tool in development, debuted by anticensorship team member Sho Ho last month, is Feed Over E-mail, a system for sending RSS feeds and other information past censors via e-mail. A user's desired news feeds are downloaded by the FOE server and sent directly to the user, so the user does not need to access the news Web sites. The system can also be used to download podcasts and other small pieces of data, and can work on mobile phones as well as computers.

Sho Ho says that FOE can be blocked, but requires blocking servers and thereby restricting anyone in the country from accessing internationally hosted e-mail providers like Gmail.

Sho Ho's announcement of the FOE program was covered widely in the media, including by [Reuters](#), [AFP](#), [The Telegraph](#), and [Foreign Policy's Net Effect](#) blog. ■

Briefs

Threats to Journalists

Zakaria Camara, a VOA correspondent in Guinea, was injured during an opposition protest in September. Security forces also took his telephones.

A Cambodian provincial court summoned RFA reporter Rotha Visal on charges of "accomplice of incitement" for reporting on a 2007 land dispute. Cambodian officials have been increasingly using the legal system to silence the press.

Police severely beat and took equipment and notes from Dawa Khan Menapal, a local journalist working with RFE/RL in Afghanistan, when he visited the site of car bomb attacks in Kandahar on August 26.

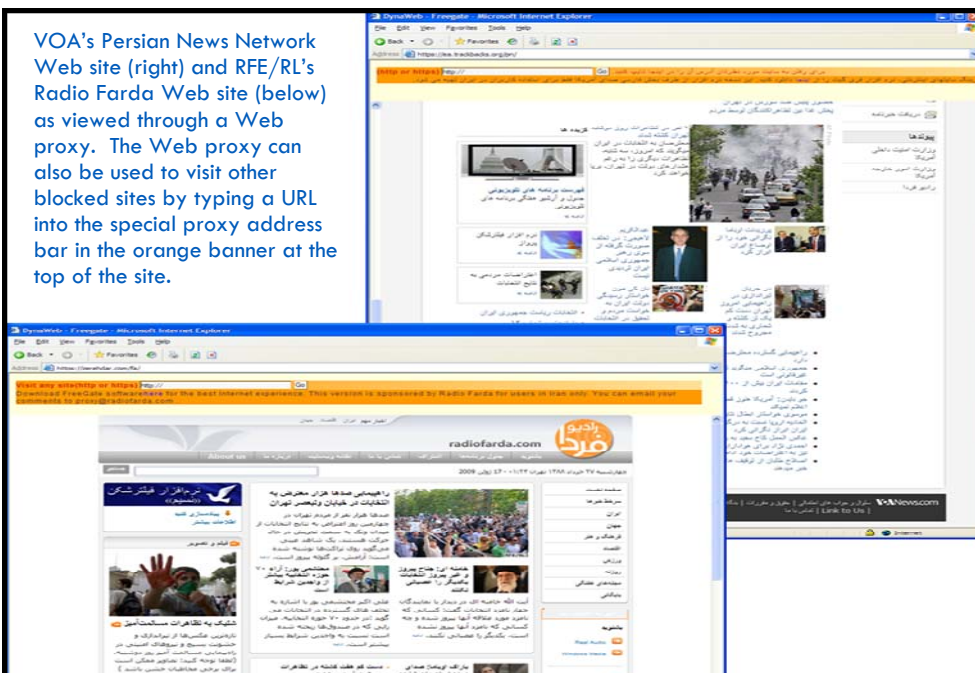
Three MBN reporters in Baghdad were assaulted between July and August. Alhurra correspondent Mahmoud Fouad was pulled from his car and threatened by Iraqi soldiers. Radio Sawa reporters Alaa Hassan and Haider Al Qutbi were physically and verbally attacked in two separate incidents.

Press Clips

In a [Washington Post](#) op-ed, BBG Governor Hirschberg discussed the detention of Rahman Bunaree, VOA's Deewa Radio stringer who came to work for VOA in the US after his house was blown up in Pakistan. Bunaree has been released but has not been granted permission to work. "Rahman Bunaree, and other allies like him, deserve our support," he wrote.

A [Korea Times](#) editorial praised VOA and RFA, saying they provide North Koreans "an important source of news about what is happening in their own country and a window on the outside world."

US Congressman Ed Royce told [The Epoch Times](#) that RFA Korean "broadcasts the truth about the regime..."



Briefs

Press Clips

RFA broadcasts to Burma “are vital in breaking the regime’s monopoly on information,” according to a [Wall Street Journal](#) editorial.

The [Associated Press of Pakistan](#) and [Washington TV](#), among others, covered RFE/RL’s Sept. 17 event on broadcasting to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, at which US Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke spoke.

The [Wall Street Journal](#) discussed the Kremlin’s suppression of foreign media, noting that 28 of Russia’s 36 radio stations that once carried RFE/RL programs have been shut down.

Hendrik Hertzberg blogged for the [New Yorker](#) about visiting RFE/RL’s new Prague headquarters, comparing it to Star Trek’s USS Enterprise. He wrote that RFE/RL “doesn’t just find facts, it distributes them, mostly to places where people would otherwise have little or no access to them.”

A [Committee to Protect Journalists](#) special report on blogging in Cuba noted that, outside of these bloggers, the only news sources Cubans have outside the official press are Radio Martí and VOA.

[Phayul.com](#) profiled Tsewang Dhondup, a Tibetan who says he learned about the Dalai Lama’s teachings and his Middle Way approach through VOA.

The [Wall Street Journal](#) featured the story of Rushan Abbas, a former broadcaster for RFA Uyghur, where she was “the sole female voice on the channel, communicating world news to western China and other Uyghur areas.”

[CNN](#) highlighted Parnaz Azima, the Radio Farda reporter detained in Iran in 2007, in a piece about American journalists detained in Iran.

Implementation Strategies at Work

From the BBG 2008-2013 Strategic Plan

Build on BBG Reach and Impact Within the Muslim World

VOA Urdu and PTV Join Hands for Peace

On August 16 the Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) broadcast a 12-hour “Media 4 Peace – United Against Terrorism” telethon, and VOA’s Urdu TV was among a handful of international broadcasters invited to participate in the show. VOA’s hour-long primetime portion, featured interviews with US and Pakistani ambassadors, artists and commentators.

RFE/RL Tajik Discusses New Mandatory Course on Islam

RFE/RL Tajik reported on the announcement by state education officials that, for the first time, Tajik schoolchildren will take a mandatory course about Islam. Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has said the Islamic history course is intended to combat extremist groups among young people and to improve the knowledge of Islam among the country’s population.

Facilitate Citizen Discourse

RFA Provides New Online Outlets for Discussion

RFA Mandarin’s new “add comment” box at the end of online report has generated heated discussions, particularly on reports about the Xinjiang unrest. RFA Mandarin also launched, in July, an electronic “drop box” for citizen journalists. Within 48 hours of its installation, RFA received two story leads, which were verified and aired.



RFA Mandarin’s digital dropbox. The text informs users to upload text, audio, video or image files to help inform RFA’s reporting.

One Year Later, RFE/RL Looks At Impact of Russia-Georgia War

Marking the anniversary of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict, RFE/RL explored the impact of the war from a variety of angles. Reporters traveled around the country to talk to survivors, while analysts discussed the impact of the war on Georgians, on the political fortunes of President Saakashvili, and on the roles of NATO and the EU in the region.



EU monitors watch Georgia’s de facto border with South Ossetia from the Georgia side. (RFE/RL)

Optimize Broadcasting Operations

MBN Launches Intranet

MBN launched a new Intranet site for employees, which provides information on benefits, strategic planning, Journalistic Code of Ethics, administrative forms and other items. It serves as the home page for Alhurra and Radio Sawa employees based at their headquarters and will soon be available to all employees.

OCB and VOA Expand Collaboration

OCB supplied studio time for VOA interviews, first for *Foro Interamericano*, which included live interaction with the host and guests in VOA’s Washington studio, and second for a taped interview for VOA’s *Mundo al Dia*. Program sharing is expected to include VOA use of three hours of TV Martí productions.

VOA Ukrainian TV Goes Tapeless

On September 8, VOA Ukrainian became the first VOA TV production team to transition to tapeless broadcasting using the Dalet/Omneon digital asset management system. VOA’s other TV services are slated to follow. In addition, all of VOA’s video editing suites are now digital and networked.