

Investment Proposals

The budget request provides additional funds to support a limited number of new initiatives that are aligned with U.S. foreign policy priorities. In addition to rationalizing our broadcast infrastructure, these requested funds will focus on countering extremism in Africa, covering the countries in transition in Northern Africa, and engaging new audiences in Burma.

Countering Extremism in Africa -- \$8 million

To counter the growing threat of extremism in the Trans-Sahel region of Africa, (a region crossing the continent from Mali to Ethiopia) the BBG is proposing an investment of \$8 million to create a multi-channel, multi-language information initiative to engage youth.

Propaganda has been a key to the destabilization campaigns in the region of groups such as al Shabaab and Boko Haram, including dedicated Twitter feeds and sophisticated audio and video production units. Meanwhile, media environments in the region lack credible, professional, indigenous information alternatives – a role that international broadcasters are well suited to fulfill.

VOA and Radio Sawa already have significant reach in the region – above 30 million weekly listeners and viewers. With new investments, they will target people ages 15-30 in a region where the median age is approximately 17. VOA will expand its offerings in French, Hausa and Bambara, while Radio Sawa will augment its programming in Arabic for sub-Saharan Africa.

Covering the Transforming Maghreb – \$2.9 million

The BBG proposes to build its newsgathering and programming capability in Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco in order to expand U.S. public diplomacy reach and impact across the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya).

At present there are no Middle East Broadcasting Network bureaus to provide programming support in the Maghreb region, which is transforming during this time of historic shifts in political and social structures.

MBN proposes to establish four small bureaus – in Casablanca, Tunis, Benghazi, and Tripoli -- to serve reporters strategically deployed throughout the Maghreb. The bureaus will expand production capability exponentially, increase production control and increase cost efficiency by eliminating reliance on third-party vendors.

Engaging New Audiences in Burma -- \$0.2 million

VOA proposes \$200,000 to hire contract reporters in Washington and Rangoon to shoot and edit video content for VOA TV and digital platforms.

With Burma's 2012 democratic opening, there are new opportunities for U.S. broadcasters to provide content for Burmese audiences and to secure affiliations with domestic Burmese media for placement of that content.

New BBG placement efforts have focused on traditional radio and television broadcasting. BBG has formed affiliations with state-controlled Myanmar Radio and TV for placement of VOA English-teaching programs and with the quasi-private Skynet satellite TV company for VOA Burmese-language TV products. BBG continues to explore prospects for further placement, including on the popular Shwe FM network.

VOA and RFA have long broadcast Burmese-language programs to audiences in Burma via shortwave and more recently satellite television. Those distribution channels continue to be critical and will continue to be used.

Rationalize Broadcast Infrastructure – \$2.8 million

The BBG is proposing an investment of \$2.8 million in broadcasting infrastructure and related support costs, in order to fulfill the strategic plan objective to rationalize program delivery. These projects will also yield future savings through positioning the agency for more efficient operations.

In order to achieve a substantial recurrent reduction of as much as \$3 million in annual rent costs, the BBG will begin to consolidate space requirements in the Wilbur J. Cohen Building and reduce occupancy of the Mary E. Switzer Building. The agency expects to consolidate up to 75,000 square feet of space currently utilized by about 60 agency employees to reduce rent costs.

By realigning shortwave transmission assets in Kuwait, Sri Lanka and Djibouti, the agency will improve service to critical targets of the world while optimizing operating costs by increasing utilization of existing lower-cost BBG transmission stations and eliminating or reducing reliance on external leases. Focus is placed on improving transmissions to Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Tibet, and Western China. This proposal will not eliminate shortwave; rather, it will restructure the BBG shortwave distribution network to leverage the use of stations with the lowest operating costs and maintain adequate shortwave service to high priority target areas where shortwave transmissions will continue to be important to satisfy agency mission requirements. Out-year cost savings are estimated to be \$1.25 million annually. This will be a multi-year project.

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Performance Goals	FY 2014 Target	FY 2015 Target	FY 2016 Target
Realign Kuwait transmitting station	Add one shortwave antenna	Expand transmitter building and add two shortwave antenna pairs and two shortwave transmitters	Add two shortwave antenna pairs and two shortwave transmitters
Realign Sri Lanka transmitting station	Divide antenna feed and add additional transmitter		
Realign Djibouti transmitting station		Shortwave antenna and transmitter installed	

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