



From: Broadcasting Board of Governors

Date: February 22, 2013

Subject: **Minutes of the Governors' Briefing (Open to Public Attendance and Webcast) of February 22, 2013**¹

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) met in Governors' Briefing and made a portion of the briefing available by webcast and open to public attendance (as seating capacity allows).

The Governors' Briefing was held at BBG Headquarters in Washington, D.C., and was attended by members of the public and was also open for public observation via streaming on the BBG website.

The Governors' Briefing was attended by the following Board members:

Alternate Presiding Governor Dennis Mulhaupt
Governor Victor Ashe
Governor Susan McCue (via video conference)
Governor Michael Meehan (via telephone)
Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs Tara Sonenshine

Governor Michael Lynton was not in attendance at the meeting.

Other persons in attendance are listed at the end of these minutes.

The agenda of the Governors' Briefing is set forth in Attachment 1.

Alternate Presiding Governor Mulhaupt called the meeting to order and noted that, in March 2012, the Board designated him to serve as "Alternate Presiding Governor" to preside at meetings of the Board in the event that the Presiding Governor cannot be physically present at the meeting. He noted the absence of Presiding Governor Lynton.

The Alternate Presiding Governor announced that this meeting was not an official governing board meeting as defined by the Government in the Sunshine Act, and, therefore, the Board's decision making today will be constrained by the requirements of the Government in the Sunshine Act.

¹ Adopted by the Board at the August 21, 2013 BBG Meeting.

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Alternate Presiding Governor Mulhaupt noted that Governor McCue was participating via video link from the Voice of America's (VOA) office in Los Angeles, California. Governor Meehan was also participating by phone from Florida.

On behalf of the Board, the Alternate Presiding Governor expressed a concern for Alhurra's correspondent Bashar Fahmi, who remains missing and incommunicado since his disappearance in August. He called on anybody with information on Mr. Fahmi's whereabouts to step forward, and called for immediate release of Mr. Fahmi.

The Alternate Presiding Governor highlighted other threats to BBG journalists and to the mission of the Agency: (1) In Tajikistan, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Radio Ozodi was targeted by an Internet blackout that included its website and Facebook, and Abduqayum Qayumov, a parliamentary correspondent since 2001, was banned from reporting for RFE/RL, the result of a refusal by the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to honor a routine request to accredit him; (2) In Iran, as many as 15 Radio Farda journalists were targeted with sophisticated online attacks, and at least three Radio Farda journalists were the subject of fake Facebook profiles and blogs that post false and even scandalous information with the aim of discrediting them; and (3) In China, a state television report accused Voice of America broadcasts of encouraging self-immolations in Tibet, and of using secret code to send messages to people inside Tibet. On behalf of the Board, Alternate Presiding Governor Mulhaupt condemned these actions, which violate international standards by targeting journalists who are doing their jobs and suppressing independent media.

Alternate Presiding Governor Mulhaupt recognized Paul Foldi as a guest to the meeting and acknowledged Mr. Foldi's closely engagement with U.S. international broadcasting for the past decade. He noted that, as a member of the staff for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Mr. Foldi's portfolio includes America's public diplomacy efforts, including the BBG. He also noted that Mr. Foldi will be leaving the Committee and, thus, expressed his gratitude to Mr. Foldi for his service.

As Chair of the Governance Committee, Governor Mulhaupt reported on its recent Committee meeting. Governor Mulhaupt said that, due to an extended briefing on the budget, the Governance Committee met in the morning in an unfortunately truncated session in order to discuss a number of topics relating to the restructuring of U.S. international broadcasting. He added that, while the Committee members believe that the Board should continue to pursue the creation of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of U.S. international broadcasting, there was a consensus among the Committee members that creation of a CEO position would be best pursued through legislation. He noted that the Committee also received a briefing from Agency staff on the progress made to date by the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) Director's working group on the International Broadcasting Innovation Act (IBIA), including developing a draft IBIA legislation, and commended the IBIA working group for its work to date. In conclusion, Governor Mulhaupt mentioned the Committee's brief discussion of a recommendation in the inspection report by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) dealing with the BBG practice of maintaining "mirror" boards of directors of Radio Free Asia (RFA) and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), where the individuals who are BBG Governors

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are also Directors of the Boards of each of the Agency's grantee corporations. Governor Mulhaupt noted that Robert Torres, OIG Senior Inspector and Coordinator for International Broadcasting, was in attendance and explained to the Committee about the OIG's intention for that particular recommendation. He further noted that the Committee had indicated to Mr. Torres that it plans to take up this and other recommendations at its next Committee meeting.

Governor Ashe commented that the Board would have achieved a quorum at today's meeting once Governor McCue appears on video via a link from VOA's bureau in Los Angeles. He suggested that for future meetings, an announcement of the Board meeting should be placed in the Federal Register in order to comply with the Government in the Sunshine Act even though a quorum of the Board might not be determined until the day of the meeting. He added that, in absence of a quorum, the Board would simply not be able to conduct a formal meeting or take formal votes.

Joining by phone, Governor Meehan gave a brief report of the Strategy and Budget Committee. He stated that the Committee had a meeting on February 6, 2013, as part of its monthly sessions, to receive a briefing on the advancement of all strategic initiatives and as recent as this morning to discuss sequestration matters. He said the Committee had instructed IBB senior management and entity heads to propose a plan that would minimize the amount of furloughs to the extent possible while coming up with the reductions as required by the Office of Management and Budget pursuant to sequestration measures. Governor Meehan announced that the Committee will meet on March 14 to take up issues as they relate to the implementation of the BBG strategy such as Iran, Russia, China and Cuba. The Committee will also assemble a panel of subject matter experts to discuss Africa strategy (mobile and radio), including a discussion of modern technology efforts that can help expand audiences in Africa. Governor Meehan commended the staff on the addition of Songhai- and Bambara-language programming, which recently received Congressional concurrence, to enhance VOA's existing French to Africa/Mali broadcasting efforts.

Governor McCue joined the meeting via a video link from VOA's bureau in Los Angeles.

At the Alternate Presiding Governor's invitation, Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) Director Carlos Garcia-Perez gave his report. Mr. Garcia-Perez said that OCB's initiative to have journalists on the ground continues to be successful and read a statement mourning the loss of Mr. Al Sledge, who served as AeroMarti Station Manager until he passed away unexpectedly on January 30, 2013. He then played a short video highlighting OCB's recent programs. Governor Ashe asked for a procedural status of the litigation case involving the 2009 OCB reductions-in-force, and if needed, a private update with the Board.

VOA Director David Ensor began his report by highlighting a fiber optic capability to the Capitol Hill for various and instantaneous photo shots, the allegations by Chinese state television (CCTV) that VOA broadcasts encourage self-immolations in Tibet, VOA Russian Service's affiliation with the Russian Business Channel to file reports from the New York Stock Exchange, and VOA's programming to Mali. Mr. Ensor briefly mentioned recent public outreach efforts, including Governor Meehan's appearance on the Bill Press show, VOA's exclusive interview

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with Japan's Defense Minister after new North Korean nuclear test, and a speaking event at the Florida World Affairs Council in Naples, FL.

The Alternate Presiding Governor welcomed Kevin Klose as acting President and CEO of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and thanked the Board, especially Governor McCue, RFE/RL's Vice-Chair, who spearheaded the effort to recruit Mr. Klose. Mr. Klose reported on the recent language service review (LSR) sessions in Prague, which included a visit by IBB Deputy Director Jeff Trimble, IBB Director of Strategy and Development Bruce Sherman, and IBB Program Analyst Karen Larson. He then played a short video produced by RFE/RL's Afghanistan Service titled, "At Afghan Brickworks, A Family Trapped in a Cycle of Debt."

RFA President Libby Liu highlighted RFA's collaboration with IBB Office of Digital and Design Innovation on a timeline.js project for both the Vietnamese and the English websites detailing the ongoing and increasingly active crackdown on dissidents in Vietnam. Ms. Liu thanked the IBB Director of the Office of Technology, Services, and Innovation (TSI) for the establishment of an MPLS (Multi-Protocol Label Switching) line for RFA Burmese TV broadcast and for distribution of its radio broadcast channels. She played a short video of a Han Chinese artist advocating Tibetan cause.

Governor Ashe reported on his trip to Cambodia in January 2013, during which he met with broadcasters from RFA and VOA at their offices there. He paid a visit to jailed Cambodian radio station chief Mam Sonando in a prison outside Phnom Penh. He noted that the cost to the Agency for his trip was less than \$600.

MBN President Brian Conniff shared the Board's concern for Alhurra's correspondent Bashar Fahmi and noted that MBN is still pursuing all leads to Mr. Fahmi's whereabouts and had nominated Mr. Fahmi for numerous awards. Mr. Conniff announced the launch of a rebranding of Alhurra on-air look to improve its appeal and attractiveness. He also announced the debut of Alhurra Television's popular series, *Rayheen ala Feen*, on Al Hayat as the first of its kind television program that tells the story of post-revolution Egypt through the lives of five young Egyptians. U/S Sonenshine asked about placement of MBN's content on local indigenous outlets. Mr. Conniff replied that *Rayheen ala Feen* is a marketing experiment in hope to raise more awareness of Alhurra.

U/S Sonenshine asked about the activities of VOA and RFA in Cambodia and whether their content and/or mission are distinct enough to warrant their presence in the same country. Ms. Liu and Mr. Ensor described the different mission and content of RFA and VOA. Governor Ashe offered his views on overlap in broadcasting by RFA and VOA. He noted that, in his meeting with U.S. Ambassador William Todd in Cambodia, the Ambassador was appreciative that RFA and VOA are active in Cambodia given the media environment there.

IBB Director Dick Lobo announced the selection of Ms. Mary Catherine Pleffner for the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) position, described Ms. Pleffner's professional credentials, and said her appointment would be effective March 11. As the beginning of a multi-year effort to change the culture at BBG, Mr. Lobo updated the Board on the Agency's contract with the Partnership for

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Public Service, including development of an action plan to improve working environment and training of agency staff to become agency "Action Leaders." Mr. Lobo announced that the Agency recently held an open house for its newly renovated fitness center on January 23, and that the enhancements were an initiative of the Union- Management forum. In closing, he briefly mentioned a number of events at the Agency to commemorate Black History month.

IBB Director of TSI Andre Mendes gave a report on current projects undertaken by TSI. He reported on the status of FM transmission projects in Africa and Afghanistan. He presented two new devices that have been produced under the Internet Anti-Censorship programs, including a mini PC stick drive containing a list of websites that can be plugged into any computer in any location to monitor whether the listed websites are blocked or not, and an electronic memory card containing content information of any U.S. international broadcaster that can be downloaded to a computer from any country with limited or no Internet connectivity such as Cuba. He then demonstrated the audio/video reception quality for the VOA Mandarin program, *VOA Weishi* (Satellite TV in China). He also demonstrated a monitoring tool that enables the Agency to assess the number of users in countries with heavy Internet censorship executing UltraSurf software to access the worldwide web safely and freely.

IBB Deputy Director Jeffrey Trimble gave a fiscal report. For FY 2013, Mr. Trimble stated that the Agency is operating under a Continuing Resolution until end of March. He said the budget for FY 2014 was still pending. He reported that the Agency was in the process of planning for possible sequestration and would minimize impact on the workforce to the extent possible. Governor Ashe thanked Mr. Trimble for temporarily filling in the CFO position. Mr. Trimble noted that IBB Chief of Staff Marie Lennon also shared the CFO responsibilities.

Lynne Weil, Director of Communications and External Affairs, briefly summarized the following activities and events: coordination with several IBB offices in order to ensure smooth implementation of the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act that goes into effect on July 2; design and layout for the 2012 BBG annual report; planning and marketing for the open house of the newly renovated Health and Wellness Center; launch of *Notebook* blog, featuring stories and photos from the field and the newsroom, profiles of individuals working at the agency, and information on international broadcasting history; and creation of more attractive exterior banners advertising the VOA studio tours to be displayed outside the Cohen Building.

Governors Ashe noted that a few Governors were scheduled to meet with key Congressional staff in the wake of the release of reports by the OIG and the GAO.

The Board accepted a request from Ann Noonan, Executive Director of Committee for U.S. International Broadcasting (CUSIB) to speak for three minutes. Ms. Noonan welcomed the appointment of Kevin Klose, recognized the attendance of President of Women's Rights in China Ms. Jing Zhang, stressed the importance of the news flow to China and Tibet, expressed CUSIB's support for VOA and surrogate broadcasters in light of the recent GAO report on overlap in broadcasting, and noted CUSIB's disapproval of the OIG inspection report attacking the authority of BBG members and the efforts of Governor Ashe.

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Other Attendees:

The following persons were also present during all or part of the meeting: International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) Director Richard Lobo, IBB Deputy Director Jeffrey Trimble, IBB Chief of Staff Marie Lennon, Deputy General Counsel and Board Secretary Paul Kollmer-Dorsey, Director of Communications & External Affairs Lynne Weil, Director of Board Operations Oanh Tran, Congressional Coordinator Suzie Carroll, Director of Public Affairs Letitia King, and IBB Director for the Office of Technology, Services and Innovation Andre Mendes; David Ensor, Director of the Voice of America (VOA); Carlos Garcia-Perez, Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB); Kevin Klose, Acting President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL); Libby Liu, President of Radio Free Asia (RFA); Brian Conniff, President of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN); Barbara Brady, VOA Chief of Staff; Steve Redisch, VOA Executive Editor; Rebecca McMenamin, VOA Acting Associate Director for Language Programming; John Giambalvo, RFE/RL Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; Benjamin Herman, RFE/RL Assistant Secretary; Bernadette Burns, RFA General Counsel; Anne Noble, MBN General Counsel; and Aviva Rosenthal, Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs.

Witnessed:

Paul Kollmer-Dorsey
Secretary

Attachment:

1. Agenda for February 22, 2013 Governors' Briefing

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ATTACHMENT 1

BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS February 2013 Governors' Briefing Agenda

Friday, February 22

12:30 – 2:00 **Governors' Briefing (Open to Public Attendance and Webcast)**

Alternate Presiding Governor's Remarks

- A. Governance Committee Update
(Governor Mulhaupt)
- B. Strategy & Budget Committee Update
(Governor Ashe and Governor McCue via videoconference)
- C. Programming Initiatives/Program Development
 - OCB Director's Report
(Carlos Garcia-Perez)
 - VOA Director's Report
(David Ensor)
 - RFE/RL President's Report
(Kevin Klose)
 - RFA President's Report
(Libby Liu)
 - MBN President's Report
(Brian Conniff)
- D. IBB Director's Report
(Dick Lobo)
 - Technology, Services and Innovation Director's Report
(Andre Mendes)
 - Fiscal Report
(Jeffrey Trimble)
 - Communications & External Affairs Director's Report
(Lynne Weil)
- E. April & June Meetings and Other Items for Consideration at Next Board Meeting