Office of Inspector General

Review of the Broadcasting Board of Governors' Middle East Radio Network Launch and Broadcast Initiatives

Report Number IBO-A-04-12

August October November 2004

Notice -- Distribution of This Document Is Restricted

This is a draft report prepared by the U.S. Department of State, Office of Inspector General, and it is subject to further revisions before it is released in its final form. This draft is provided to Broadcasting Board of Governors officials solely for their review and comment. Recipients of this draft report are not authorized to make further distribution or to release this information, except for official review and comment.

	and the second of the second o
Introduction	
Summary	
Purpose and Scope	
Background	

Draft UNCLASSIFIED

Findings and	Recommendations
Obje	ctive 1. Examine the Status of the Launch of Radio Sawa to Determine if
it Wa	as Completed and Assess its Degree of Success
Obje	ctive 2. Assess Whether Radio Sawa Used Appropriate Procurement
and s	Staffing Practices and Procedures
Obje	ctive 3. Determine the Extent to Which Radio Sawa Has Implemented
the R	ecommendations in OIG's 2002 Survey of MERNDetermine to What
Exte	nt Radio Sawa Has Implemented Recommendations Outlined in the
Offic	e of Inspector Concral's 2002 Survey of Middle East Radio Network
Recommenda	ations49
Abbreviation	s52
Appendi <u>x</u> ees	1
Α.	Radio Sawa Broadcast Schedule (Effective April 4, 2004)53
B.	Map of Radio Sawa Distribution System55
C.	Quality Assurance Language Panel Description and Comments
D.	Possible Factors Contributing to the Differences in the Pew and ACNielsen Survey Results
E.	Evaluation of the Radio Sawa Research Survey63
<u>F</u>	Agency Comments
₽ <u>G</u> .	Agency Comments OIG Rebuttal

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) launched Radio Sawa in March 2002 to improve audience share over the one to two percent achieved by the Arabic service of the

Voice of America (VOA) and to counter the proliferation of anti-American news reports, disinformation, and stories disseminated over state-owned Arab media in the Middle East. Formerly known as the Middle East Radio Network (MERN), Radio Sawa, according to BBG, was launched to assist in the fight against terrorism by broadcasting accurate, timely, and relevant news and information about America and the region.

Radio Sawa was support the BBG mission, which is to promote and sustain freedom and democracytic values¹, and to broadcast U.S. government editorials², expand on the small audience share in the region held by VOA and to influence the opinions of overseas audiences in the Middle East through a combination of news, editorial comment, talk, and music³ in accordance with the Voice of America's (VOA) Charter, the United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994. The Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998, applicable law and congressional expectations, and commitments made by BBG and Radio Sawa. Radio Sawa was also to provide clear and effective presentation of the policies of the United States government, and responsible discussion and opinion on these policies, thereby advancing long-term U.S. national interests.

Radio Sawa was a <u>VOA</u>-pilot <u>program-project</u> designed to replace VOA's Arabic Service in the region. Its programs, based upon U.S. commercial broadcasting formats, were to feature an innovative mix of Arabic and Western music, news, analysis, editorial comment, and talk shows targeted for 15 to 30 year olds and news seekers of all ages. The demographics of the Middle East indicate 60 percent of the population is 25 years old or younger, and Radio Sawa has targeted the "new young mainstream" of educated Arabs. Radio Sawa broadcasts in Arabic, transmitting 24 hours-per-day, seven days-per-week with dedicated programming streams for Iraq, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt/Levant, the Gulf, and Sudan. (See Appendix A.)

Marrying the Mission to the Market, the BBG Sstrategic Plan. 2002-07, p.4, and Broadcusting Board of Governors Middle East Radio Network Performance Plan - FY 2003, p. 1.

Reaching the Middle East: A New Broadcusting Opportunity, p. and Marrying the Mission to the Market,

Senate Report 107-60, to accompany S. 1401, Sept. 4, 2001.

⁴ Pub. L. No. 103-236, Title III.

³ Pub. L. No. 105-277, Div. G.

⁶ See 22 USC 6202

The objectives of this review were to (1) examine the status of the launch of Radio Sawa to determine if it was completed and its degree of success by FY 2004; (2) assess whether Radio Sawa followed appropriate procurement and staffing practices and procedures; and (3) review BBG's compliance with recommendations made by OIG in its 2002 survey of MERN. Additionally, this review examined whether BBG followed adhered to the guidance of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 2003, which provided authorized funds for MERN the Middle East Radio Network of Voice of America. Padio Sawa, while currently a VOA pilot project, will soon-transition to grantee status in FY 2005 on about November 14, 2004.

⁷ Survey of the Broadcasting Board of Governors' Middle East Broadcasting Activities and Initiatives (OIG Report Number IBO-A-02-02, Mar. 2002).

Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Conference Report 107-60, to accompany S. 1401, (Sept. 4, 2001).; Subtitle B, U.S. International Broadcasting Activities, Section 111, Authorization of Appropriations.

⁹ Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Conference Report 107-60, to accompany S. 1401, (Sept. 4, 2001)., Subtitle B, U.S. International Broadcasting Activities, Section 111, Authorization of Appropriations. Pub. L. 107-228, Section 121.

In this review, OIG determined that the launch of Radio Sawa was a qualified success based on an increase in audience share many fold over the performance of VOA Arabic. that it replaced, impressive credibility demonstrated despite being denigrated by Arab media, and important improvements in the availability of its programming owing to its 24 hour format and enhanced signal distribution from an expanded transmission network. A survey conducted in July and August of 2003 showed Radio Sawa with an unweighted average listenership of 31.6 percent among in five Middle Eastern countries surveyed. That compares with a listenership of one to two percent achieved by VOA's former Arabic service. However, Radio Sawa's impact beyond the few countries surveyed, whose governments are U.S. allies in the Middle East, has not been determined. The Radio Sawa signal has blanketed parts of the Middle East using FM transmitters, medium wave transmitters, digital audio satellite, shortwave transmissions, and the Internet. This compares to an only seven hour a day VOA shortwave signal and a weak medium wave signal that BBG acknowledges wasn't easy to hear., although However, Radio Sawa has not delivereding all it promised, experienceding some start up problems, and needsing further work onto complete the buildout of its infrastructure. The measurement of success used by Radio Sawa was increased audience size. Moreover, BBG has not put in place measures to assess Radio Sawa's impact in promoting democracy or changing the hearts and minds of those in the Middle East.

Among the shortcomings OIG found were a lack of standards in hiring and in the performance of guidance for broadcast employees, little coordination and cooperation between Radio Sawa and Voice of America operations in the region, and BBG's failure to appoint the lack of a project director to run Radio Sawa, despite a congressional mandate expectation that Radio Sawa be under the direct authority of a senior agency official with autonomy for day to day operations. OIG also found irregularities in contracting, including the questionable use of a sole-source contract to hire Radio Sawa's management consultant. Most significantly, however, OIG has determined that Radio

Sawa fails to meet fully the expectations of the Voice of America charter, under which Radio Sawa operates.

Radio Sawa has focused on a successful American broadcasting technique, that relied heavily on a music format and research, and as a result news and other information programs represent only-25 percent of its broadcast time. Although BBG acknowledges that Radio Sawa's mission as a public diplomacy tool is to engage and inform audiences overseas, some BBG officials, in interviews with OIG, expressed concern over the predominantly music-driven format, and BBG's apparent reluctance to air Also, of concern to OIG has been BBG has delayed in conducting audience call in shows, as well as its failure to broadcast U.S. government editorials, and discussions of such "hot button" issues as U.S. policies in the region. In response to a question regarding call in shows Governor Pattiz told OIG, "I don't think we've gotten to that point yet," He added, "We are not as live as I anticipated we would be." Although Radio Sawa presents its program Free Zone as its format for discussion of "hot button" issues. News Director Mouafac Harb stated to OIG that the program airs policy statements made by the President or other senior officials and does not discuss the issues.

The fact that Radio Sawa shuns news analysis and editorials causes OIG to determine that Radio Sawa has not fully met the requirements of the VOA Charter. The Charter specifies "VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies." Radio Sawa has not fully complied with this expectation because it considers news analysis and U.S. government editorials to be "propaganda."

OIG has several recommendations to improve Radio Sawa's ability to meet its legislative mandate to promote democracy and pro-American attitudes. These recommendations also will allow assist Radio Sawa to in complying with existing laws and regulations, laws that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) believes will remain applicable when Radio Sawa makes the transition from federal entity to grantee status in FY 2005.

To assess Radio Sawa's accomplishments in meeting legislative mandateseongressional expectations and commitments to Congressperformance, OIG used a performance scorecard like that used to assess an agency's performance under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). Table 1 summarizes OIG's findings and conclusions.

Table 1. Radio Sawa Performance Management Scorecard

	Accomplished		
Measures	Yes	Partially	No
Broadcast News			
Increase Audience Size			
Department Coordination in HiringSecurity	7		
Screen of Hires			
Brief Congress Regularly	7		
Senior Management Official for Operations			
Influence Public Opinion in Region ¹⁰		√ ·	*
Conduct News Analysis			. 1
Broadcast U.S. Government Editorials			V
Audience Call-In Programs ¹¹		<u>v</u>	34
Conduct Comprehensive Program Reviews			7
Middle East Regional Network Hub			4
Coordination With VOA		<u> </u>	*
Licensing Agreements Completed		√ √	
International Broadcasting Act Provisions Met		*	
Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring		24	
Aet22 USC 6202 Provisions Met			
Voice of America		4	
Charter Provisions Met			
BBG's Strategic Objectives Met		1 1	

In March 2002, OIG conducted a survey of MERN and issued a report in response to a congressional request. BBG has at least partially fulfilled one of the two recommendations in that report that related to increasing news programming on Radio Sawa. BBG decided not to follow the other recommendation, which called for the use of

The effect of Radio Sawa in influencing public opinion in the region was not measured by BBG or OIQ.
Radio Sawa reported that it launched an audience call-in show, SawaChat Itastl-in, in the Gulf broadcast stream in March 2004.

Public Diplomacy advisers from the Department of State (Department). OIG believes the recommendation still merits consideration.

Although Radio Sawa has been promoted by BBG as a heavily researched broadcasting network, OIG found that the research concentrated primarily on gaining audience share, not on measuring Radio Sawa's influencing of the audience. OIG also questions whether BBG has appropriately focused its assessments of Radio Sawa's impact on Middle East audiences. For instance, OIG determined that BBG focuses had focused its audience research on Radio Sawa's audience within the region'sthose nations with pro-U.S. nationsgovernments, such as Kuwait and Jordan, and not on its audience within the region's larger nations, many of which are not pro-U.S. For instance, there is no measurement of Radio Sawa's presence in Algeria, which has a population of 32 million and where terrorists have operated. However, BBG is beginning to expand its surveys to include such countries as Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Libya. The BBG also plans to include the West Bank in audience research. OIG also found reasons for concern about the research results BBG has presented to Congress.

Finally, OIG identified quality issues in Radio Sawa broadcasts of such things as grammar, style of presentation, pronunciation, stories editors had to throw out as below standard, and quality issues in audience research data and analysis, based on the results of fieldwork and the findings of two panels of highly credentialed Arab-language experts and scholars.

In conducting this review, OIG held discussions with key officials: and editors, researchers, program and technical directors, and staff members of Radio Sawa/MERN, VOA, and the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) in Washington, London, Cairo, Amman, Kuwait City, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Jerusalem.

OIG interviewed senior Department officials in the following offices: including: the Acting Director General, the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, and the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, and experts from the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, the Bureau for Diplomatic Security, the Bureau of International Information Programs, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, and the Foreign Service Institute, as well as officials. In addition, OIG spoke with officials from the National Security Council, the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the Office of Management and Budget, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the General Services Administration, and the Office of Government Ethics.

In addition, OIG interviewed key personnel of the Arabic service of the British Broadcasting Corporation in London and a key employee of Al Arabiya/Middle East Broadcast Center in Dubai. OIG also met with an officials from the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World and took public diplomacy training attended a forum on public diplomacy in the Arab and Islamic world. OIG also met with media watchers and experts on international broadcasting issues within and outside of the federal government.

OIG had experts in survey research and statistics review BBG's audience polling and convened highly credentialed, independent quality assurance panels of experts in Middle East languages Arabic to conduct listening surveys. Finally, OIG examined a variety of documentation.

OIG encountered audit impairments by BBG. For example, some requests for meetings with BBG officials were met with resistance, and on occasion, the BBG executive director would include himself, without invitation, in OIG interviews with BBG staff. When challenged by Assistant Inspector General Louis McCall, the

Executive Director said that he was directed to come by BBG Chairman Kenneth Tomlinson.

OIG believes that these actions, at the objection of OIG, may have intimidated BBG employees and made them less forthcoming.

OIG conducted this review under generally accepted government auditing standards. Major contributors to this report were Louis A. McCall, Assistant Inspector General for International Broadcasting Oversight; Lenora Fuller, auditor-in-charge; Alfred Jurison, senior management analyst; Carmen Mina, auditor; Michele Anderson, auditor; Maria Hart, management analyst; Ernest Arciello, statistician; Timothy Fitzgerald, information technology specialist; and Darrel Onuzika and Joyce Koo, interns.

Anti-U.S. Sentiment in Middle East Increased

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, new importance was given to how the United States communicates its views and foreign policy globally, particularly with the people in the Arab and Muslim world. The ability of the United States to fight terrorism, resolve conflicts, and address international issues depends in part upon influencing a global audience.

Following the terrorist attacks, sSenators Hagel, Murray, and Boxer expressed support for the proposed MERN (Radio Sawa), stating that it would promote "open communication of information and ideas in support of democracy," provide "reliable news and discussion of issues relevant to the audience in a format to appeal to young adults and news-seekers of all ages," and establish "greater United States media presence." Radio Sawa would allow for the delivery of "news and information about events occurring in the region" as well as "provide the region with increased exposure to news and information and Western journalistic standards of a free press." They further

stated, "The expansion and enhancement of our radio programming into the Middle East are critical to the success of our policies in the region." Additionally, one sSenator Boxer noted, "The Arab public would like information about United States businesses, technology, and advances in medicine." 12

Secretary of State Colin Powell has publicly stated that the United States must "talk to the Arab media, to the Arab public" via Ppublic Ddiplomacy, to get the message out regarding American policies and support for the region. In testimony weeks after the terrorist attacks, the BBG chairman acknowledged that U.S. international broadcasting had a vital mission to counter misinformation and messages of hate regarding the United States. On another occasion the chairman declared that the agency was "fully committed to playing a crucial role in public diplomacy in support of U.S. foreign policy....[W]e will continue to tell the truth about terrorism and the United States response to it."

Public opinion about the United States in the Middle East is overwhelmingly negative, angry, and distrustful.¹³ Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, in an April 2004 statement, quoted in the international press, said "Today there is hatred -- unprecedented hatred -- of the Americans like never before in the region." In its October 2003 report, the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World said U.S. public diplomacy has taken on critical importance to "expand the zone of tolerance and marginalize extremists," particularly in a region where animosity against the United States is unmatched. 15 As noted by the Secretary of State, at present, the greatest public diplomacy challenges to the United States are in the Arab and Muslim world.

¹² Congressional Record, Senate hearing-of Sept. 14, 2001, p. S9437.

Department of State, Office of Research, Opinion Analysis, March 31, 2003, p.; What the World Thinks in 2002, Pew Global Attitudes Project, Dec. 4, 2002; A Year After the Iragi War, Pew Global Attitudes Survey, March 16, 2004; and Changing Minds Winning Peace; A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy for the Arab & Muslim World, Oct. 1, 2003, p.

Hosni Mubarak: America Collects 'Hatred' in the Arab World," Le Monde, June 18, 2004, p.5. (OlG

translation.)

¹⁵ Changing Minds Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy for the Arab & Muslim World, Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World (Oct. 1, 2003).

The increasing anti-U.S. sentiment in the Middle East provides sustenance for radical political Islam at the expense of moderate elements and places greater pressure on governments in the region that support the United States. As noted in the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, ¹⁶ the United States and the international community must "wage a war of ideas" to win the hearts and minds of people by providing assurances, especially to the Muslim world, that America works to promote moderate and modern governments, resolve regional disputes, foster economic and social development, and demonstrate that this is not at odds with Islam. Echoing that view, the Department's Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs testified before the Congress in February 2004 that America's standing abroad had so deteriorated that, "just as it has taken us many years to get into this situation, it will take many years of hard, focused work to get out of it." ¹⁷

BBG Sees War on Terrorism as High Priority

BBG has stated that one of international broadcasting's highest priorities is "support of the war against terrorism" ¹⁸ by providing accurate and objective news and information in priority areas. As a result of a 2000-2001 review of broadcast languages, which showed low VOA Arabic listening rates, and in response to the proliferation of anti-American rhetoric, disinformation, and journalistic and state censorship in the Arab media, BBG launched MERN on March 23, 2002. Later renamed Radio Sawa, after the Arabic word for "together," the network was intended to provide a credible channel of communication and to promote freedom and democracy through accurate and objective news and information. ¹² It was to broadcast to the Middle East region as a whole while targeting broadcasts to individual countries

Since the September 11, 2001, attacks, BBG as well as the Department have expanded their outreach to Muslim-majority countries. In its FY 2002 Performance

¹⁶ White House Press Release, National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, February 2003.

¹⁷ Testimony of Margaret Tutwiler before the House International Relations Committee

Marrying the Mission to the Market, the BBG Strategic Plan, 2002-07.

¹⁹ Marrying the Mission to the Market, the BBG Strategic Plan, 2002-07, p.

Report, BBG said the primary strategic goal of U.S. international broadcasting was to promote the free flow of information around the world. BBG's operational goals for the new network include supporting U.S. foreign policy objectives by presenting "the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, along with responsible discussion and opinion of these policies" and "providing audiences with accurate, comprehensive, and objective news." Some goals are agency wide and apply to Radio Sawa, such as being "designed so as to effectively reach a significant audience." MERN also has specific objectives that support BBG overall goals and objectives. 21

In its October 2003 report, the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World also observed that U.S. public diplomacy has taken on critical importance to "expand the zone of tolerance and marginalize extremists," particularly in a region where animosity against the United States has grown to unmatched levels. ²²

Radio Sawa's Format and Progress

According to Radio Sawa managers, its broadcasts now feature mostly music, news, and other programming such as non-news information and [U.S.] policy. Some BBG officials describe Radio Sawa as a "rock and roll station." The BBG chairman, in testimony before Congress, generally credited Radio Sawa's mixing of popular Arabic and American music as the reason for its "phenomenal" success. For example, BBG reports reaching 29 percent of audiences aged 30 and above on a weekly basis, versus the former VOA Arabic Service, which garnered only a 1- to 2-percent listening rate in the region.

² Changing Minds Winning Peace.

^{20 22} U.S.C. 6202(a)(7).

The Broadcasting Board of Governors Middle East Radio Network Performance Plan—FY 2003 lists MERN Objectives as "Design and build the network to achieve significant coverage using appropriate delivery means for local audiences; Attract and build a significant audience from among the target group of under-30's; Stay "on message" by using regular audience research to guide program decisions, Present news that is objective, comprehensive, fresh, and relevant to Middle East audiences; [and] Provide a forum for reasoned discussion of regional "hot button" issues and U.S. policies."

In responding to the complex media environment, and to counter the changing requirements in information-deprived or repressive nations, BBG adopted a broad international broadcasting strategy. The Radio Sawa signal has blanketed parts of the Middle East, using FM transmitters (IBB owned plus a few leased), medium-wave transmitters, digital audio satellite, shortwave transmissions, and the Internet. (See Appendix B.)

BBG acknowledges that television is a more efficient medium for disseminating ideas and values to the Arab and Muslim world. Some senior BBG officials said television, particularly from satellite transmissions, is exploding in popularity in the region, but that daily radio use remains strong. In FY 2004, BBG launched the Middle East Television Network (MTN), also known as Alhurra, as a new grantee. The Radio Sawa staff director said passage of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill 2004. Signed into law January 2004, provides the authority and funding for Radio Sawa to morge with MTN and become a nonprofit entity (a grantee). The target date for completing the transfer to grantee status is October 1, 2004 The Administration's FY 2004 budget called for Radio Sawa to move into MTN as part of that new grantee. As a grantee, rather than a government entity, Radio Sawa would not have to broadcast U.S. government editorials, none of its employees would be under Chief of Mission authority, it would in no way participate in the International Cooperative Administrative Services System at U.S. embassies and consulates, its security requirements would be fewer and less expensive to implement, and it could hire and fire staff at will.

(INSERT PHOTO 1: DISHES)

Photo 1: Satellite Dishes for TV Reception in Cairo Show Popularity of TV

²³ Pub. L.No. 108-199.

Objective 1: Examine The Status of the Launch of Radio Sawa to Determine if it Was Completed and Assess its Degree of Success.

Radio Sawa Has an Inconsistent Commitment to Influencing Middle East Audiences

BBG's FY 2002-2007 strategic plan, Marrying the Mission to the Market, identified several missions for MERN, including to increase audience size by attracting and building a significant share among the under age 30 target group, staying "on-message" by using regular audience research to guide program decisions, presenting news that is objective, comprehensive, fresh and relevant to the Middle East, providing a forum for reasoned discussion of "hot button" issues and U.S. policies, and designing and building the network using appropriate delivery means for local audiences. Further. Congress expected MERN to influence public opinion.²⁴

As initially conceived, MERN's Radio Sawa's programming format was to contain news, music, news analysis, editorial comment, official U.S. government cditorials, audience participation programs, and individual features, on such topics as health, business, and women's issues. Board member Governor Norman Pattiz described Radio Sawa as "a VOA pilot project" when he appeared before the House Appropriations Committee in April 2002, at which time he said, "In a week, we'll begin broadcasting policy programs, editorials, questions of the day and reviews and critiques of Arab press reports." Having missed that target, on June 11, 2002, in testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Pattiz again said, "In the not too distant future, we'll begin broadcasting policy programs, editorials, questions of the day and review and critiques of Arab press reports." In testimony before the House International Relations Committee in November 2001. He said that the target audience of those ages 15-30 "are not news-seekers, first and foremost." Other Radio Sawa staff told OIG they did not do editorials comments nor did they conduct news analysis, or and until recently.

²⁴ Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Conference Report 107-60, to accompany S. 1401, (Sept. 1, 2001). Subtitle B. U.S. International Broadcasting Activities, Section 114, Authorization of Appropriations.

²⁵ Reaching the Middle East: A NewBroadcasting Opportunity, pp. 15-16.

audience call-in shows. According to BBG Chairman Tomlinson and Radio Sawa officials, American policy is reported through airing statements of U.S. government officials and dissenting comments by other newsmakers, but their mission is not to advocate U.S. foreign policy. As Governor Pattiz stated in testimony, "It is not our job to change attitudes. It's our job to report the news." However, in a statement submitted to the House Committee on International Relations, Governor Pattiz argued that "winning hearts and minds" is the reason the United States must enhance government-supported international broadcasting in all countries with large Islamic populations. Further, on the matter of influencing public opinion, the mission statement of the former United States Information Agency (USIA) called for the agency to "to influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest." Indeed, Congressa Senate report accompanying <u>legislation</u>, in authorizing appropriations for international broadcasting, expected MERN "to influence public opinion" in the Middle East region. Congress That Senate report expected that with the launch of Radio Sawa, BBG would feature a combination of "news, editorial comment, talk, and music" as part of a strategy to combat terrorism against the United States. 26 The increasing anti-American sentiment in the Middle East sustains radical political Islam, prevents moderates from speaking out, and places greater pressure on U.S. allies in the region.

While BBG acknowledges that Radio Sawa's mission is to engage and inform audiences overseas, BBG opposes the requirement to presentRadio Sawa has not broadcast official U.S. government editorials choosing instead to broadcast what BBG believes is editorial comment in other formats. Radio Sawa consultant Bert Kleinman told OIG that it was not Radio Sawa's mandate to broadcast traditional VOA-type editorials. The Managing Editor for Radio Sawa told OIG that "VOA did editorials, but Sawa could not as editorials were forbidden." One Radio Sawa official told OIG that the network's presence in the region is an accomplishment itself. Others running the network suggest that BBG has rejected the mandate-expectation to influence audiences, characterizing such efforts as "propaganda."

²⁶ Senate Report 107-60, to accompany S.1401, (Sept. 4, 2001), Sec. 111.

BBG May Have Erroneously Redefined Radio Sawa's Debate Over Public Diplomacy Role

Under the VOA Charter, the United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994²⁷, and Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998²⁸; relevant law, U.S. international broadcasting standards and principles must be "consistent with the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States." This requires that U.S. international broadcasting provide It must include "clear and effective presentation of the policies of the United States Government and responsible discussion and opinion on theose policies." However, as the Government Accountability Office (GAO) testified to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and State on April 1, 2004, the Department and BBG have somewhat different interpretations of their public diplomacy missions. OIG found that, in some contexts, BBG embraced the mission of influencing opinions, although in other contexts BBG rejected such a mission. On balance, BBG now seems to believe that influencing opinions about the United States and United States foreign policy is not part of its mission.

In March 2004, the Secretary of State, in testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary and Related Agencies, said that the greatest challenges for U.S. public diplomacy are in the Arab and Muslim world, and Radio Sawa was a way to "get America's message out." The aim of initiatives like Radio Sawa is not only to improve how Americans are perceived and to discuss U.S. policies but also to perform the "critical" work of "demonstrating who we are as a people."

In April 2004, BBG officials told the same congressional committee that Radio Sawa's mission to promote freedom and democracy was being achieved, not with "propaganda," but by the free flow of accurate, reliable, and credible news. It is through

²⁷ Title III, Sections 303 (b) (3) and 305 (a) (3).

²⁸ Title II, Section 323 (d) (1).

²⁹ 22 USC 6202(a)(1)

³⁰ 22 USC 6202(b)(3)

interview programs, according to one BBG official, that United States policies are disseminated. However, Radio Sawa's public diplomacy role, according to GAO, may have been seen by the Board as acting "to engage and inform" and not "influencing attitudes of overseas audiences."

Although BBG acknowledges its mission to engage and inform audiences overseas, particularly in the Middle East, it views the influencing of audiences in the region as a Department function, according to GAO. In recent testimony, one BBG official informed Congress that it is not Radio Sawa's mission to influence audiences. Radio Sawa believes that, by presenting the news alone, it influences the audience, but that limited view represents a missed opportunity to get America's message out.

Audience Research Needs to Focus on Larger, Less-friendly Nations

Radio Sawa is broadcast from transmitters located in the politically moderate Middle East nations allied with the United States. Audience surveys have been conducted in Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, and Morocco, the governments of which are all considered friendly to the United States. The surveys show increased audience awareness and growing popularity for Radio Sawa. However, GAO testified on April 29, 2004, that it is unclear how many people are actually listening to Radio Sawa. BBG has not conducted audience research in areas of the region that are hotbeds of anti-Americanism and supporters of terrorism. Therefore, Radio Sawa's impact beyond moderate U.S. allies in the Middle East has not been determined. Also unclear is Radio Sawa's actual reach into the 22 Middle Eastern countries that have a total population of over 318.8 million and are members of the Arab League.

BBG does not generally exhaustively measure signal strength in the region, which makes it difficult for it to determine the actual reach to the populations of the countries surveyed by Radio Sawa. <u>During an interview with</u>

George Moore, the Director of IBB's Office of Engineering and Technical Services, and other members of his staff, he stated that they do monitor for signal quality and strength but do not have numbers for all the regions nor do they have monitoring in some countries. For example, they have no shortwave data from Libya or Tunisia and only limited data on Egypt. The Radio Sawa Broadcast Matrix, provided by Mr. Moore and presented in Appendix A of the report, shows signal strength measured in Iraq (short and medium wave), Egypt (medium wave), and North Africa (short wave). There are no signal measurement entries for the Iraq FMs, Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza, Israel, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Tunisia, Sudan, Djibouti, or Yemen.

Survey research experts suggest that audience results reported by BBG may have been improperly interpreted, and the conclusions may have been overstated. The Radio Sawa survey that showed a high correlation of its popularity with favorable views of America conflicts with recent survey findings of the Pew, Gallup and Zogby surveys taken in the region. The latter surveys indicate the positive attitude toward the United States has plummeted.

Consequently, BBG has yet to demonstrate convincingly Radio Sawa's contribution to successfully fighting the war on terror or its ability to change anti-American attitudes in the region. However, OIG acknowledges that it is difficult to conduct audience research within hostile regimes and nondemocratic societies and does not imply that the decline in positive attitudes toward the United States is due to Radio Sawa broadcasts. Indeed, without those broadcasts, it is possible the decline in positive opinions would have been greater.

Under GPRA³¹ all agencies must set strategic goals, measure performance, and report on the degree to which goals are met. However, OIG has found no evidence of a specific strategic plan or of a comprehensive long-term strategy for Radio Sawa, at least in the portion of BBG's strategic plan that addresses Radio Sawa. <u>Bruce Sherman, BBG</u>

³¹ Pub. L. No.103-62 Title V, Section 306 (a).

Deputy Executive Director, stated the document created by Gary Thatcher Reaching the Middle East: A New Broadcast Opportunity, provided a strategic framework. Also, Gary Thatcher, who wrote the document and was the initial project director of Radio Sawa, told OIG that there was no single document containing a strategic plan. Similarly, GAO found in two separate reports, that BBG's plan may be "hampered by a lack of details on how the Board intends to implement each of its program objectives." GAO added, "Missing from the plan are specifics on implementation strategies, resource requirements and project time frames." CARL PLEASE PROVIDE CITATION FOR **FOOTNOTE**. Furthermore, Radio Sawas's success in gaining audience share is difficult to determine because Radio Sawa has not established either a baseline or specific performance measures specifically to chart its progress in winning the hearts and minds of Middle East listeners. However, Radio Sawa does have other performance measures in its latest performance plan. MERN's FY 2003 Performance Plan said "Setting meaningful audience targets requires a baseline. So far, MERN does not have one...." ³²OIG found no documentation on a baseline or performance measures to measure influencing the population (winning hearts and minds). Although gaining audience share is separate from influencing the audience, both OIG and the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World have questioned whether Radio Sawa has focused more on audience size and composition than on potential impact on attitudes in the region.

Procedures and Standards Lacking

Radio Sawa appears to have had no established procedures or clear standards for the hiring of language-qualified contract staff. OIG's interview with Jack Welch, IBB Director of Personnel, determined that there were two different procedures for the hiring of contractor and full time equivalent personnel. Welch stated that his office was not involved in the hiring of contractors, but would offer advice and assistance, but had not been contacted. OIG determined through interviews that no established procedures were

³² Broadcasting Board of Governors Middle East Radio Network Performance Plan - FY2003, p. 6.

used in the selection and hiring of language-qualified contractor personnel. Specifically, Mahmoud Zawawi, a former United States Information Agency Foreign Service officer and currently the senior stringer for the Radio Sawa office in Amman, Jordan, stated that the radio broadcasters and journalists hired by Radio Sawa do not undergo the level of scrutiny or level of testing procedures for language, reading comprehension, and writing skill required for international broadcasters hired by VOA and that they fail to meet the standards set by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and followed by VOA in hiring personnel. Doug Mercado, former director of the MEPC, told OIG that when Radio Sawa News Director Mouafac Harb came to Dubai to hire contract personnel, he could not ascertain the hiring criteria and observed people being hired after a five-minute interview. Further, Mr. Mercado told OIG he received numerous complaints about the lack of professionalism and broadcasting skill of those hired. Another worker at the MEPC stated they were unsure of the hiring selection process and said that some people "walked in form the street and were hired." Mouafac Harb responded to an OIG question, regarding hiring of staff, saying that he conducted interviews, but made no mention of testing procedures.

Compounding its-Radio Sawa's ad hoc hiring practices is was the lack of a comprehensive stylebook or guidance for broadcasters, until one was distributed overseas in May 2004 and in Washington in June 2004. Radio Sawa Staff Director Jim Hooper, advised OIG that a MERN stylebook existed prior to that, but had not been distributed to the staff for fear of it getting into the wrong hands. OIG obtained a copy of that first undistributed effort titled *Voice of America Middle East Radio Network (MERN)*STYLEBOOK. In its fieldwork, OIG found no one at the MEPC or the Radio Sawa offices in Cairo or Amman that used a MERN stylebook, rather each individually developed notes for reference purposes.

OIG convened highly credentialed, quality assurance panels of experts to listen to Radio Sawa broadcasts. (See Appendix C.) These experts reported unevenness in the skills demonstrated by the correspondents and stringers and in the quality of broadcasts.

The panelists also said the inexperience of some of the broadcasters might have undermined America's credibility. Were there a periodic program review process, such problems might have been prevented. However, unlike the VOA language services, Radio Sawa has not undergone a comprehensive program review in its nearly two and a half years of broadcasting. However, BBG is considering now initiating a plan to conduct a program review. These issues will be discussed further under the review's second objective.

Little Coordination Between Radio Sawa and VOA

IBB was also tasked by Congress to mesh traditional VOA programming with a quasisurrogate stream of broadcasts from the region, but OIG found little evidence of
coordination and cooperation between VOA and Radio Sawa in this regard or on other
matters. Examples of coordination were reported in *Inspection of the Middle East News*Bureaus of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (IBO-I-04-08). ADD DATE As
initially planned, the new network would broadcast Radio Sawa correspondent reports
from the United States, the Middle East, and worldwide, focusing on news from the Arab
world, American positions on issues facing the region, newsmaker interviews,
background reports, and news provided by VOA's Washington [central news] and the
Middle East news bureaus.³³

VOA officials and Radio Sawa managers indicated there has been little coordination between each organization's news operations, despite the expressed wishes of Congress. A senior manager within VOA told OIG that "very little coordination is occurring on VOA's part." Also, Andre de Nesnera, then Director of the VOA News Division, told OIG that there was no coordination between Radio Sawa and VOA and that occasionally Radio Sawa would air stories without crediting VOA. When Radio Sawa set up its news office in Baghdad, for example, it was done independently and separately from the temporary VOA Baghdad bureau or that of Radio Free Iraq. The head of the Radio Sawa Baghdad office was also unaware of a VOA presence in Baghdad

UNCLASSIFIED

³³ Reaching the Middle East: A New Broadcasting Opportunity, p. 15.

until so informed by OIG. During the war in Iraq, VOA had several journalists embedded with the U.S. military but was unaware that Radio Sawa also had an embedded journalist providing coverage. One VOA senior manager also said that Radio Sawa copies VOA news products but fails to credit the source. One VOA manager also faulted Radio Sawa for not including informing VOA in of arrangements for an interview with Secretary Powell. Regarding the interview with Secretary Powell, a senior manager for VOA advised OIG that the Radio Sawa News Director did not list Secretary Powell's interview in the daybook prior to the interview. The daybook is used to coordinate stories and interviews as well as share the contributions of stringers by the same newsroom.

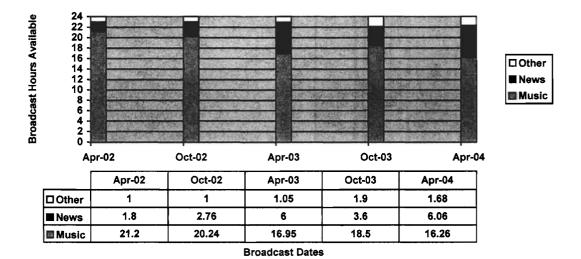
Radio Sawa managers did not initially follow BBG's security practices and procedures in selecting the office building for the Middle East Programming Center (MEPC) in Dubai, the intended hub of Radio Sawa. As a result of hasty decision-making and poor planning, BBG encountered substantial, avoidable delays in the launch of MEPC.

The Radio Sawa Broadcast Timeline

Radio Sawa operates 24 hours-a-day, seven days a week, presenting 325 newscasts per week over six broadcast streams. After launching with an all-music format in March 2002, Radio Sawa gradually modified its programming to incorporate news, interviews, news magazines, and public service announcements. During the war in Iraq, news broadcasts were surged to the region were surged up to 18 hours per day. Additionally, in October 2003, Radio Sawa newscasts were increased-by 30 percent. (See Chart 1 below.)

Chart 1: Transition of Radio Sawa Programming

Radio Sawa Programs



Source: OIG Analysis of International Broadcasting Bureau, Radio Sawa data.

Legislative Authorization Provisions Are Not Fully Met Debate Over Format

Radio Sawa operates under the VOA Charter, which requires that VOA, according to the previous BBG Chairman, be an "accurate, objective, and comprehensive source of the news, to present a balanced and comprehensive projection of American thought and institutions," [and] "to present policies of the United States clearly and effectively." VOA's mission, as outlined in its charter, is to "serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news" [and] "present the policies of the United States." VOA presents U.S. policies and official views in specially designed editorials that are identified as statements of U.S. government policy.

Media watchers, international broadcasting experts, Department officials, and some Radio Sawa staff support having Radio Sawa begin providing audience call-in shows, discussion programs, and on-airaudience voting. They see such programming as modeling democracy in action. One radio station in Iraq recently launched an all-talk radio format that is highly popular with adult audiences, according to recent media

reports.³⁴ Although aA VOA official acknowledges that this kind of programming promotes civil society and democracy in action, Radio Sawa managers support the eurrent music-driven format. BBG believes the Radio Sawa weekly program "The Free Zone" is the only program on freedom and Democracy in the Middle East and is an effective means of conveying such ideas and values and empowering democracy and freedom of speech advocates in the Middle East. Radio Sawa launched an audience callin show, SawaChat Itasil, in its Gulf broadcast stream in March 2004. Although Radio Sawa has developed SawaChat and other programs with some interactive features, it does not do live call-ins or edited time delayed call-ins that would be a means to prevent anti-American extremists from taking advantage of the format.

"Music was the hook to get audience attention," said one Radio Sawa official. However, according to one several BBG managers involved inknowledgeable of the project "there are discussions among IBB officials have questioned whether the music format meets the agency's mandate [as set forth in 22 U.S.C. 6202]." These officials, as well as members of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy³⁵, question the network's ability to "move the needle" [or to] "get the message out" about U.S. policies and to change the attitudes of Arab listeners towards the United States.

BBG's Strategic Objectives Lack Detailed Performance Measures for Radio Sawa

GPRA requires agencies to develop strategic plans; set performance goals that are objective, quantifiable and measurable; and report annually on actual performance compared to those goals. However, some BBG officials say Radio Sawa lacks a specific strategic plan. A conceptual framework with objectives was prepared in 2001 by the former project manager, but it has not been fully updated and provides no performance objectives that are quantifiable and measurable. However, Radio Sawa, has had a performance plan for each year since FY 2002. Although these annual performance plans contain annual performance goals that are quantifiable and measurable they do not do

35 Changing Minds Winning Peace.

³⁴ Radio Dilja, all-talk and news radio in Iraq, was launched in May 2004.

what a strategic plan does, that is, to tell you what Radio Sawa will look like in the out years and establish milestones and an implementation strategy.

BBG's strategic plan for 2002-2007, *Marrying the Mission to the Market*, does not contain a single long-term, strategic goal or related program objective to gauge Radio Sawa's audience size using measurable program objectives or measurement criteria. Under Goal II, BBG has established the task of "attracting and building a significant audience from among the target group of under [age] 30." There is no mention of a baseline audience to begin the measurement, and MERN officials admit Radio Sawa started without a baseline. The MERN FY 2003 Performance Plan said, "Setting meaningful audience targets requires having a baseline. So far, MERN does not have one, since it has not broadcast its first program."

Audience Size Is the **Primary** Performance Measure Used To Assess Success

From its introduction, Radio Sawa increased its audience size from approximately two percent in 2001 to over 30 percent in selected countries in 2003. That makes Radio Sawa a huge success, because audience size is the primary performance measure that Radio Sawa uses to measure its success. Another principal measure is credibility. Radio Sawa does very well on that score too. Radio Sawa has also done well with its build out of its transmission system, although work remains to be done. Some of the increased audience size might-should be attributed not to programming, but to Radio Sawa's stronger signals, which provide greater broadcast coverage than offered by the VOA Arabic Service. Certainly this is true when comparing Radio Sawa's coverage of areas relying on shortwave or nighttime-only medium-wave signals with those areas having FM or a strong, 24-hour medium-wave signal. Nevertheless, programming is important and has been an important factor in generating Radio Sawa's audience. The fact that some Middle East radio stations have attempted to copy the Radio Sawa format is further evidence that programming matters.

³⁶ Broadcasting Board of Governors Middle East Radio Network Performance Plan – FY 2003, p. 6.

Similarly, one task under BBG's Strategic Plan for FY 2002-2007 is to design and build a regional network to achieve significant coverage using appropriate delivery means for local audiences. However, the plan's strategic goals and objectives do not specify locations, delivery methods, or dates for accomplishment. The lack of strategic objectives for Radio Sawa makes it difficult to gauge whether the network has met internal expectations with regard to coverage, delivery means, or timelines, which would contain measures for success. However, as noted above, Radio Sawa has had annual performance plans since 2002 with richer specificity.

Recommendation 1: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should design and implement measurable performance indicators in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act, as part of a meaningful performance review process to evaluate Radio Sawa's effectiveness and ensure the quality of its program delivery. These performance indicators should include those used by other agency entities, including program quality, signal strength, target audiences, Internet use, and awareness.

Recommendation 2: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should ensure that the Office of Research validates and verifies performance indicators used in the evaluation of Radio Sawa.

Radio Sawa Gains Higher Audience Share Than the Former VOA Arabic Service

According to BBG, the VOA Arabic Service's regional audience was about 3.1 million persons for FY 2002, including 1.8 million persons between the ages 15 and 34. To illustrate the projected growth from VOA's audience size of 3.1 million, BBG projected Radio Sawa's audience growing to 7.2 million persons, including 6.2 million ages 15-34 in FY 2004.

As of April 2004, BBG reported that weekly listenership surveys of five Middle Eastern countries show that Radio Sawa is the leading international broadcaster, with an

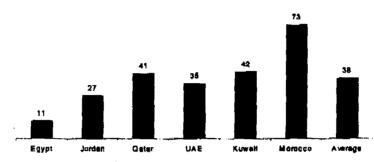
average weekly audience of 38 percent of adults. Additionally, BBG reports success in reaching 29 percent of audiences aged 30 and above on a weekly basis in surveyed countries, compared to the former VOA Arabic Service's 1-2 percent average listenership. Radio Sawa's increased coverage in the Middle East affords America a unique opportunity to engage previously untapped audiences in the region with information on U.S. foreign policy and what America represents. (Chart 2 provides listenership rates for six countries surveyed by ACNielson for BBG.)

Chart 2. Radio Sawa General Listenership Rates

Radio Sawa Weekly Listenership

(% listening among the general population 15+)

Radio Sawa is now the leading international broadcaster in each of these countries and competes head to head with the top domestic stations. (Radio Sawa on FM in all countries except Egypt which is covered via AM only.)







Source: BBG Briefing April 2004.

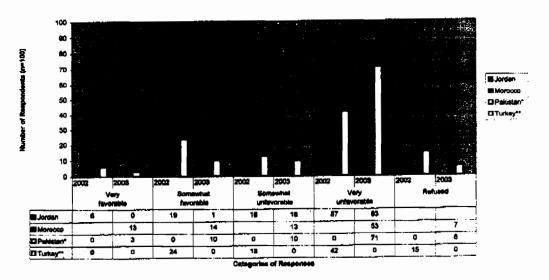
Surveys of Middle East Audiences Show Admiration of Some American Traits and Achievements, but Distrust of American Policies

Research conducted in recent years by the Pew Research Center, Zogby International, Gallup Poll, ACNielson, and others indicates that, while there is admiration for American technology, entrepreneurial zeal, and achievements, the public's opposition to U.S. foreign policy shapes overall opinions of the United States in the Arab and Muslim world. Surveys taken throughout the Muslim world show that the United States is viewed with increasing distrust and frustration. In countries with Arab and Muslim majorities, surveys show widespread opposition to the U.S.-led war on terrorism and to America's policies in the region. For example, Zogby reported that up to 88 percent of all respondents surveyed believed that U.S. policy was unfavorable toward the Arab world, and the Department's Office of Research reported similar findings. The chart below reflects the growth in anti-American sentiment in selected Middle East countries.

Chart 3: Selected Results from the Pew Global Attitudes Project Showing the Rise of Unfavorable Attitudes Towards the United States

UNCLASSIFIED

Pew Global Attitudes Project



Source: OIG presentation of Pew surveys conducted July - October 2002 and April - May 2003.

For FY 2004, BBG projected reaching an audience of 7.2 million, which is about 5 percent of the audience in the areas where Radio Sawa medium-wave transmitters are located and slightly over 10 percent of the audience in countries were Radio Sawa FM transmitters are located. The governments of Countries hosting FM transmitters are considered politically moderate U.S. allies. However, Radio Sawa's impact has not been measured in Arab League member states that receive shortwave, or limited medium wave, or limited FM transmissions, such as Algeria, Libya, Syria, and Yemen as well as the West Bank and Gaza. 37 Many of these countries areas have been identified as places where al Qaida or affiliated terrorist groups have operated.³⁸ It is difficult to measure Radio Sawa's progress in countering support for terrorism in these areas.

2003.

³⁷ As shown in the Radio Sawa Broadcast Matrix presented in Appendix A, the West Bank has an FM transmitter and also benefits from the FM transmitter in Amman, Jordan, Part of Syria, including Damascus, benefits from the FM transmitter in Ailun, Jordan.

The Network of Terrorism, U.S. Department of State, Office of International Information Programs,

Table 2: Comparison of Radio Sawa's Broadcast Locations and Targets With Populations of the Middle East

	Radio Sawa Mediumwave Network	Radio Sawa FM Network	Population
Algeria			32,129,324
Bahrain		√ (165,900)	677,886
Comoros			651,901
Djibouti		√ (466,900)	466,900
Egypt	7		76,117,421
Iraq	1	√(13,466,200)	25,374,691
Jordan	1	√(2,302,700	5,611,202
Kuwait	1	√ (38,400)	2,257,549
Lebanon	-√		3,777,218
Libya			5,631,585
Mauritania			2,998,563
Morocco		√ (9,058,800)	32,209,101
Oman			2,903,165
West Bank and Gaza		√ (20,600)	3,443,267
Qatar		√ (238,500)	840,290
Saudi Arabia			25, 795,938
Somalia	,		8,304,601
Sudan	1		39,148,162
Syria	7		18,016,874
Tunisia			9,974,722
United Arab Emirates		√(2,252,600)	2,523,915
Yemen	√	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	20,024,867
Population Total			318,879,142

- 1. Arab League member countries, 2004.
- 2. Population figures from Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book July 2004.
- √ Radio Saws transmitter locations or targets. Shortwave transmissions, although hampered by weak signals, are delivered
 to the areas not checked in the table above. Populations in parentheses in FM column indicate the approximate potential
 listening population covered.
- Radio Sawa is received in Alexandria, Egypt, and at night in Cairo, via AM and digital broadcasts from transmitters in Cyprus.

When asked the reason for Radio Sawa's apparent success, BBG Governor Pattiz told Congress on April 29, 2004,³⁹ that, unlike the vibrant television market in the Middle

³⁹ Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Operations and Terrorism on April 29, 2004.

East, radio stations in the region are generally government-controlled and boring. BBG thought this meant Radio Sawa could compete well.

Qualitative and Quantitative Measures Are Needed

There is broad agreement within the international broadcasting community and in diplomatic and government circles that radio and television can be effective in countering anti-American sentiment in the Middle East. However, Radio Sawa has not fully met its mission because of its preoccupation with gaining audience share through music and its failure to measure its ability to engage and influence its audience does not know for certain whether it has been effective in countering anti-American sentiment in the Middle East because its audience research has not measured such impact, but it did measure credibility. Radio Sawa's senior management consultant Herbert Kleinman suggested to OIG that playing a blend of Western and Arabic music is itself an achievement and "a political statement" about connecting two cultures.

Radio Sawa has been promoted by BBG as a heavily researched broadcasting network, but OIG found the research has concentrated primarily on gaining audience share and not on measuring its success in influencing the audience. The research collected included information on media use (radio, TV, etc.), listening behavior (time of day and duration), and listener preferences (news, sports, music). Additional surveys were used to determine the best mix of music to attract the target audience. OIG believes that Radio Sawa's focus on music may be due to the fact that the two primary architects of Radio Sawa had the majority of their professional experience collaborating in creating and marketing successful music broadcasting programs.

Radio Sawa Performance Measures Do Not Assess Impact

Radio Sawa management has not followed BBG standards in conducting performance reviews to assess its quality and whether U.S. national interests are being achieved. Moreover, BBG has not put in place measures to assess Radio Sawa's impact in promoting democracy or changing the hearts and minds of those in the Middle East.

Therefore, despite its apparent success in building larger audiences, compared with that of the former VOA Arabic Service, it is difficult to ascertain Radio Sawa's impact in countering anti-American views and the biased, state-run media of the Arab world. Also, according to Board member Governor Norman Pattiz, whom BBG Chairman Tomlinson called the "father of Radio Sawa," the launch will be incomplete until the transmission network is expanded. Governor Pattiz told OIG he wants to broaden the build out of the network and explained that BBG initially went to the countries where establishing the network would be easiest.

Radio Sawa Does Not Participate in IBB Program Reviews

Congress specified in the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of FY 2002-2003 that significant resources should be devoted to evaluating program content by performing post-broadcast analysis to ensure that U.S. interests were advanced. However, OIG found that Radio Sawa management had been reluctant to do this and only recently thought about conducting such a review. OIG noted that BBG's strategic plan stated that annual program performance reviews were to be conducted by internal and external experts to ensure that programming quality deficiencies were addressed. Additionally, the IBB's Office of Program Performance Review was responsible for evaluating program quality for all IBB entities; however, Radio Sawa did not have a program review, despite the requirement for an annual review. However, BBG advised OIG that a consultant has now been hired to design a comprehensive evaluation of Radio Sawa.

BBG offered to conduct a program review of Radio Sawa, but Radio Sawa officials declined with BBG acquiescence. Radio Sawa officials told OIG that, for quality control in lieu of the program review, they implemented their own internal quality control program. This program focused on a daily review process, rather than quarterly or annual reviews, to ensure instant adjustment of the news product if needed. One aim of this approach, according to Radio Sawa management, "was to link the review process more directly to the goal of maintaining and expanding Radio Sawa's audience share" in the broadcasting region by demonstrating to listeners that they will be behind the news

curve unless they listen to Radio Sawa. Management indicated that this would prevent problems from being repeated from one newscast to the next and enable breaking news to be aired immediately.

To implement this quality control effort, the news director and managing editor listened to live newscasts at the office and from home via Internet streaming. They also reviewed texts of news scripts and listened to the audio of most newscasts they did not monitor live. The news director and managing editor told OIG they monitor the newscasts for language and grammar and, as of May and June 2004, have now provided style guides to each shift editor and staff member. They say they remain in constant communication with stringers in the field, to oversee coverage of breaking news stories and give direction on how to cover events and improve quality.

Program Quality Indicators Are Not in Place

The performance indicators for evaluation and program quality in BBG's strategic plan for 2002-07 have not been formally put in place for Radio Sawa. OIG found evidence that, in some cases, the lack of uniform quality controls, such as not having an official style guide for over two years, might have undermined Radio Sawa's efforts to ensure that U.S. interests were served during broadcasts. For example, current and former Radio Sawa and MEPC officials complained to OIG that staff at Dubai lacked editorial guidelines after the launch and that, as a result, correspondents' reports were uneven, with stringers reporting "word for word" from articles in the local newspapers and the biased Middle East news services. OIG also found that MEPC has gone long periods without a permanent news editor. Editors told OIG that, in some cases, grammatical errors were made on the air, reflecting what some current and former managers criticized as the lack of professional training, proper experience, and journalistic and broadcast skills of the staff.

Recommendation 3: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should develop a comprehensive action plan for completing full implementation of the mandate in

the Foreign Affairs Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2002-2003, which requires that BBG devote significant resources for post-broadcast analysis at Radio Sawa, ensuring that programs promote democratic values and support United States interests in the Middle East.

Independent Expert Panels Assess Radio Sawa's Performance

Radio Sawa lacked a structured, institutionalized, and systematic program performance review. In its absence, OIG convened two separate panels of highly credentialed Arab language experts and scholars to listen to Radio Sawa broadcasts and assess the communication and pronunciation skills of the broadcasters and stringers.

Honoring the firewall of journalistic independence, the panelists did not evaluate the content of the broadcasts, but instead examined the clarity, style, grammar, syntax, delivery, and presentation of Radio Sawa's nonmusic programs. The panels listened to recordings of Radio Sawa broadcasts in the Levant, Moroccan, and Iraqi streams for the weekend of December 13-14, 2003, the weekend of Saddam Hussein's capture.

Generally, the panelists found that the Radio Sawa broadcasters and stringers they heard were "adequate," and some were "very good." There was a consensus that a few should be replaced, however. Delivery was generally acceptable, but both panels cited significant disparities between broadcasters and stringers with regard to problems with grammar, syntax, and pronunciation in all three streams. Both panels suggested that the broadcasters and stringers would benefit from having a standardized style guide (a style guide had not been distributed at the time OIG convenend its panels) and receiving guidance from a grammarian, closer editing, and additional training.

Panelists also indicated that some of the newscasts were repeated over several hours without updates. The absence of appropriate dialects in at least one of the language streams was quite notable. One panel finally concluded, "Radio Sawa fails to present America to its audience." One panel agreed that most audiences in the region prefer to

hear modern standard Arabic, instead of colloquial Arabic, during the news because news broadcast in colloquial Arabic "divides the Arab nation." They concluded by suggesting that "Radio Sawa does not meet the quality standard and fails on that score in comparison with Al-Jazeera." They neted opined that parents in the region would prefer their adolescents not listen to Radio Sawa because its broadcasts contained so much poor Arabic grammar. OIG heard similar sentiments from Arab Foreign Service national public diplomacy staff at U.S. embassies it visited. The panelists also viewed the nonmusic programming other than news as having no "localization effect," such as colloquialisms, in its three streams, making the streams a fiction in that regard.

Overall, the two panels agreed that, in several cases, the apparent lack of training or professional experience of some of the broadcasters and stringers sometimes led to embarrassing, if unintended results, ultimately hurting the image of the United States-and possibly undermining public diplomacy efforts. (See Appendix C for more details about the panels and their findings.)

Recommendation 4: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should design and implement a plan at Radio Sawa for the selection and hiring of language-qualified broadcasters and stringers to meet the highest professional, journalistic, and broadcast standards.

No Basis for BBG's Claim That Radio Sawa Is the Leading International Broadcaster

OlG relied on an outside statistician/survey research expert (contractor) and an OlG statistician to examine the validity of the means by which Radio Sawa's survey research contractor, InterMedia, and its subcontractor, ACNielson, collected and validated audience research data regarding credibility, listeners' views of the United States, listenership, and attitude change. Also examined was the research on the impact of Radio Sawa on progress in the war against terrorism.

The contractor and OIG statistician, working independently, both concluded that BBG cannot support the claim that "Radio Sawa is now the leading international broadcaster." They said it might be more accurate to state "Radio Sawa is the leading international broadcaster in Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, UAE, and Kuwait in terms of weekly listenership." Radio Sawa's annual listenership in Egypt (13.7 percent) is not as high as that of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (18.5 percent).

In the opinion of the contractor, BBG's strategy is for Radio Sawa to "reach the largest possible audience for the news and information mission by attracting listeners with a unique Arabic-Western music format presented in a fresh, upbeat American style." The contractor also said survey research commissioned by BBG did not distinguish between Radio Sawa's credibility regarding news and its credibility on other topics, such as music, sports, and entertainment.

Unable to Validate Radio Sawa as the "Most Reliable Source of News"

OIG relied on an outside statistician/survey research expert (contractor) and an OIG statistician to examine the validity of the means by which Radio Sawa's survey research contractor, InterMedia, and its subcontractor, ACNielson, collected and validated audience research data regarding credibility, listeners' views of the United States, listenership, and attitude change. Also examined was the research on the impact of Radio Sawa on progress in the war against terrorism. According to BBG, ACNielsen surveys conducted between July and August 2003 in Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, UAE, and Kuwait show Radio Sawa is the leading international broadcaster in these markets and is the most credible source of news. However, based upon available information about how the survey was conducted, OIG's survey research expert concluded it would have been better for BBG to state that the listeners view Radio Sawa as a reliable source of news and information in those nations. The contractor also found other reasons for concern. They include

- The analysis done by BBG's research contractor showed that Radio Sawa was not the most reliable source of information in Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, UAE, and Kuwait. In Jordan, for example, the proportion of listeners who viewed Radio Sawa as "very reliable" or "somewhat reliable" was smaller than that for BBC, Radio Monte Carlo, and Radio Jordan AM. The contractor also said survey research commissioned by BBG did not distinguish between Radio Sawa's credibility regarding news and its credibility on other topics, such as music, sports, and entertainment.
- BBG's survey researcher, ACNielsen, did not report the comments of those who knew of but did not listen to Radio Sawa regarding why they did not listen. This information would have helped identify the extent of public trust regarding Radio Sawa.
- ACNielsen's survey regarding views of the United States could have been more specific about favorability toward American culture or policies in general and Middle East policies specifically. It is likely that people there are more favorable toward American culture than U.S. policies, especially policies for the Middle East. (Appendix D examines possible factors contributing to Pew and ACNielsen survey differences.)

No Link Between Success of Radio Sawa and Pro-American Views

The data provided to BBG by its outside contractor indicated that the weekly Radio Sawa listeners were much more likely to be "personally inclined" toward the United States than the nonlisteners. However, OIG's contractor believes this relationship should be viewed as a two-way correlation because people may listen to Radio Sawa because they were already "personally inclined" toward the United States. In addition, to assess the effect of Radio Sawa on its listeners' views of the United States, longitudinal surveys would have to be conducted, looking at rates of change in this regard among the weekly listeners, annual listeners (past 12 months), and nonlisteners. A causal relationship cannot be established between listening to Radio Sawa and favorability toward the U.S., based on

the ACNielson survey data. Nevertheless, in testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary on April 1, 2004, BBG Governor Norman Pattiz said, "By a margin of two to one, Sawa listeners are more favorably disposed towards the United States of America than are non-Sawa listeners. So the question of moving the needle is a question that is very important to us."

BBG Could More Accurately Measure Attitude Change and the Impact of Radio Sawa by Asking Better Questions

OIG's contractor also concluded that attitude change should be measured over a period of time. To assess the impact of Radio Sawa on people's attitudes and opinions, BBG could implement a longitudinal study design consisting of either a panel or survey. If possible, a panel could be put together of a representative sample of the target population, including listeners and nonlisteners and those who favor or oppose the United States. Information could be collected on their views and whether the views change after listening to Radio Sawa for a certain period of time.

Of course, measuring the differences between the baseline and follow-up responses of panelists would have to consider participants' characteristics and such matters as whether there was a national or international event or an overall change in international politics. A less rigorous approach is the longitudinal survey design, as currently implemented by BBG. It uses different samples of respondents that are randomly selected from the target population. This could measure changes in attitudes and behavior of listeners, but the current survey questionnaire used for BBG asks only about the participant's view of Britain, the United States, and France. Additionally, certain questions are not asked of Egyptian audiences. To present a complete picture of changes in Sawa listeners' attitudes, a more comprehensive catalog of attitude and behavior measures and questions needs to be incorporated into the study design. (See Appendix E for additional discussion of survey methodology.)

Finally, the OIG statistician found significant anomalies in BBG's April 2004
Alhurra and Radio Sawa Progress Report results. These anomalies degrade the reliability
of Radio Sawa audience research results and ultimately question the research's validity.

Recommendation 5: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should ensure that the Office of Research institutes a more rigorous, comprehensive study to measure Radio Sawa's impact on the attitudes of audiences in the Middle East and describe in detail the survey research undertaken to measure audience attitudes and changing views of the United States since the network's launch. The study should also include detailed analysis on the research design and data collection methodology and explain the process for the collection and reporting of reliable results.

Claims of Progress in the War Against Terrorism Are Not Substantiated

BBG Chairman Tomlinson testified before Congress on February 27, 2003, that "Radio Sawa may be the star of our efforts in the war on terrorism." However, OIG's contractor concluded that the current survey data are not adequate to establish a causal link between Radio Sawa's broadcasting and the progress in the war on terrorism. This is because no survey question asked about respondents' attitudes and behaviors toward terrorism or the war on terrorism.

The contractor stated that to assess the impact of Radio Sawa on this issue, some specific attitudinal questions should be included in surveys measuring respondents' attitudes and behaviors regarding terrorism and the war against terrorism. Any changes discovered may be incorporated into Radios Sawa's programming and might increase the effectiveness of Radio Sawa's broadcasting. More recently, the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, in its annual report on U.S. government international communications efforts said, "International broadcasting must also show measurable impact, whether through viewer statistics, attitude surveys, or more anecdotal evidence such as adoption of U.S. media practices by local broadcasters."

OIG's contractor reported that, while Radio Sawa listeners' favorability toward the United States could be an indirect indicator, it has limited validity. First, a causal link has to be established between Radio Sawa and listeners' favorability to the United States. OIG's contractor said "it is likely that people who hold a positive attitude toward the United States in general may have a different attitude toward U.S. policies regarding terrorism in the specific." The contractor also noted "that a clear definition of terrorism has to be included in the survey, considering the political and religious climate of these countries."

Recommendation 6: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should ensure that measures are implemented to show Radio Sawa's progress in supporting the war on terrorism, including a detailed explanation of how survey research is conducted and what methodology is used for interpreting results. There should also be updates on Radio Sawa's strategic objectives and actions to extend the penetration of coverage and deployment of medium-wave and FM transmitters to cross borders and reach audiences throughout the Middle East, particularly in nations that sponsor terrorism or have active terrorist organizations operating on their soil-or populations of more than five million.

Objective 2: Access Whether Radio Sawa Used Appropriate Procurement and Staffing Practices and Procedures.

In evaluating whether appropriate practices and procedures were followed in setting up Radio Sawa, OIG found that the agency might have acted inappropriately in several areas. For example, OIG found that Radio Sawa management did not comply fully with BBG's security procedures and guidelines nor with several federal rules and procedures designed to ensure integrity in the administration of contracts and business operations. Also, Radio Sawa did not follow congressional mandates with regard to establishing its own management structure or implementing clear standards for selecting and hiring staff.

However, as expected by Congress, the Department's regional security officer did screen hires.

Radio Sawa Does Not Have an Overall Project Director

In the Senate Report accompanying the authorization act creating Radio Sawa, 40 Congress specified it was urged that the network should be under the direct authority of a senior agency official with autonomy for day-to-day operations. To date, the position of Radio Sawa director has not been filled. During the network's start-up phases, a project director supervised the initiative. After Radio Sawa began broadcasting, management shifted from a project director to a team composed of a network news director, staff director, and a BBG senior management consultant. BBG Governor Norman Pattiz told OIG "We had an acting director, Gary Thatcher, when we first went on the air. When Thatcher moved out, we created a team approach using primary drivers. That scenario has worked." Radio Sawa Staff Director Jim Hooper responded to an OIG e-mail on the matter stating, "the position of Radio Sawa director has not been filled. During the prelaunch and startup phases of Radio Sawa, a project director, Gary Thatcher, supervised the initiative. After Radio Sawa began broadcasting, management shifted from a project director to a team approach rather than one director. The team composed of Network News Director, Moufac Harb, Staff Director James Hooper, and BBG senior management consultant Bert Klienman, is supervised by BBG's Middle East Committee." Finally, the BBG telephone directory for 2003 lists the position of the MERN director as vacant. BBG's Middle East Committee, chaired by Governor Norman Pattiz, supervised the senior management consultant, Bert Kleinman, who worked under a contract requiring him to report directly to the Board.

The hiring of the consultant and the creation of a management team conflicted with the specific directive of Congress to put in place a senior agency official to lead and direct operations. Senate Report 107-60 that urged that a senior official for the Network have autonomy for day to-day operations. OIG observed that the consultant played a

⁴⁰ Pub. L. No. 107-228. Senate Report 107-60, to accompany S. 1401, (Sept. 4, 2001).

lead role in managing Radio Sawa, and in interpreting and implementing the congressional mandate.

Administration and Operations Need Improvement

OIG also has identified potential irregularities in the administration of contracts, which were put on a fast track to respond to the war on terrorism. BBG and Radio Sawa managers did not fully comply with several rules and regulations of the Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA),⁴¹ the Prompt Pay Act,⁴² the Competition in Contracting Act,⁴³ the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) Act,⁴⁴ Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR),⁴⁵ and OMB circulars and directives. Radio Sawa's management structure was disjointed, adequate internal controls were not imposed, and there was confusion among staff about roles and responsibilities.

The Selection Process for Management Consultant Is Questionable

OIG considers the sole-sourcing of the contract for the management consultant, Mr. Kleinman, to be questionable. The justification for sole-sourcing the contract was Mr. Kleinman's Middle East commercial broadcasting experience. Mr. Kleinman did have an extensive background in American commercial radio production and also apparently maintained a close relationship with a Board member. He did not have extensive Middle East experience. However, BBG took steps to ensure that Mr. Kleinman would be awarded a contract as a senior management consultant to the Board for Radio Sawa. The contract provisions required that the consultant provide the Board with written recommendations on both FM and medium-wave radio programming opportunities as well as plans and techniques to be used by MERN/Radio Sawa. The proposed responsibilities included developing a broadcast operations strategy and a statement of

⁴¹ Pub. L. No. 97-225.

⁴² Title V Chap. III, Part 1315.

⁴³ Pub. L. No. 98-369

⁴⁴ Pub. L. No. 93-400.

⁴⁵ Pub. L. No. 93-400, amended by Pub. L. No. 98-83.

methods for applying American radio techniques to MERN; instituting planning, budgeting, and operational procedures; making staffing recommendations; training personnel at MERN and at the MEPC; and developing innovative methods for achieving public diplomacy objectives in ways that are attractive to the target youth audience.

Some Contract Terms Not Fulfilled

OIG's review of the contract files did not find evidence that most contract deliverables had ever been prepared, nor did the IBB contracting staff believe that copies of the deliverables were received to be placed in the contract files. On arrival at the Dubai MEPC facility, OIG determined that, although the MEPC staff had not received training in editorial standards and broadcast preparation, several had received the technical equipment training to manage broadcast production. Part of the delay in getting the MEPC operational was in hiring a news editor. Shortly after one was hired he was fired. However, subsequent to OIG's visit to the MEPC, the Amman senior stringer was sent to Dubai to provide training and BBG advised OIG that Radio Sawa also sent a contractor to Dubai to provide additional broadcast training.

Radio Sawa Management Structure Is Disjointed

When the original Radio Sawa project director left, no replacement was appointed. Instead, BBG created a team to run Radio Sawa operations. This management structure appears disjointed, however, and it is difficult at times to determine how decisions are made. There were no specific administrative procedures in place for Radio Sawa staff, according to current and former management officials. Radio Sawa operational guidance was still being drafted at the time of the OIG review. Information regarding operations and procedures does not flow from management to staff.

Managers complained to OIG about not being kept informed about program priorities or organizational and operational issues. In addition, the management team did not hold team meetings. OIG found that there was no clear chain of command, and until

asked by OIG, there was no transition strategy or plan for Radio Sawa's transition from federal entity to grantee status, which is was planned for October 2004, but has now been shifted to mid-November 2004.

Bert Kleinman was named president and chief executive officer of the new MTN, a private corporation that will include Alhurra Television and Radio Sawa when Radio Sawa transitions to grantee status on October 1, 2004. Many Radio Sawa and IBB staff considered the consultant to be the authority that had autonomy over the design and operations of Radio Sawa but was only accountable to the Board.

A System of Internal Controls and Procedures Has Not Been Established<u>in</u> Transition

Administrative procedures have been communicated primarily through a collection of electronic messages and telephone calls. The disjointed management structure may have prevented the planning and preparation of guidelines and procedures or caused people to assume another office was creating them. Radio Sawa officials did not establish a budget for its news office in Baghdad, so the senior stringer there used \$30,000 from personal savings to lease hotel space to pay for the news office, personal accommodations, and needed communications equipment. Eventually, he was reimbursed. OIG does recognize that the banking system in Iraq became non-functional after the fall of Saddam Hussein such that, for a period, Iraq became a cash society. This created challenges for Radio Sawa.

Specific guidelines were not prepared for managing Radio Sawa property and equipment inventories. At the time of OIG's visit, Ffurniture and equipment used by Radio Sawa staff in Cairo and Jerusalem were purchased and managed by VOA.

However, BBG advised OIG that Radio Sawa purchased equipment for its Cairo office that was installed shortly after OIG departed. Additionally, expenses for Radio Sawa operations were often paid with VOA funds because a separate Radio Sawa account was not established. OIG found it difficult to ascertain what was funded and budgeted by

Radio Sawa and what VOA funded because funds were blended. Although FMFIA and OMB Circular A-123, *Management Accountability and Controls*, require the establishment of an organization with checks and balances and with clear management accountability and internal control procedures, the Radio Sawa executive administrator admitted to having no knowledge of any such standards and guidelines. <u>According to OMB</u>, Radio Sawa will still need to comply with existingthese laws and regulations after it transitions to a grantee. BBG has advised OIG that separate accounts have been established.

Fiscal and accounting problems were common, and all of MEPC's contractor staff complained about not being paid on time. E-mail records indicate that on several occasions, payments to contractors were delayed by more than a month. Radio Sawa administrators blamed employee error. Iraqi stringers also experienced delays in payments exceeding one month. The lack of internal controls and procedures might have created this situation. According to the MEPC staff, these payment delays created morale problems and led to work disruptions.

The Prompt Payment Act of 1982⁴⁶ requires agencies to ensure that payments to vendors are timely; otherwise, additional fees may be incurred by the agency. The lack of timely payments to MEPC contractor staff has been corrected, according to Radio Sawa management.

Recommendation 7: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should ensure that Radio Sawa develops and implements a system of administrative procedures, organizational guidelines, operational policies, and management controls to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively in support of operations and in accordance with the Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act and Office of Management and Budget Circular No. A-123.

Staff Lacks Warrants to Sign Contracts

⁴⁶ Pub. L. No. 97-177.

OIG found evidence of questionable practices by BBG in the management of Radio Sawa contracts, and officials who signed some contracts lacked proper training and warrants. The IBB senior procurement officer executive told OIG staff that a number of procurement and contracting decisions for Radio Sawa operations were sometimes made by staff who lacked warrants and acted without his prior knowledge or formal approval. The practice neither complies with the OFPP Act nor OFPP Policy Letters 92-3 and 97-01, which establish training and certification standards for warranted staff. The lack of a warrant also fails to comply with the agency's own standards, set forth by the precursor to BBG, USIA, in 1993. In addition, an authorized representative of the contracting officer did not have the training required to perform those duties.

Recommendation 8: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should ensure that all Radio Sawa staff responsible for negotiating, administering, signing, and monitoring contracts are fully certified and warranted in accordance with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act and Office of Federal Procurement Policy Letters 92-3 and 97-01, to assure that the government's best interests are protected.

Key Contracts

In a contract to hire Mr. Kleinman as president of the Middle East Television

Network MTN, the contract was signed by BBG Chairman Kenneth Tomlinson in his capacity as Chairman of the MTN Board of Governors and administered by BBG Executive Director Brian Conniff, as the authorized representative of the contracting officer. According to IBB procurement staff, the contract was the only one managed this way within the entire BBG organization. BBG took steps to ensure that Bert Kleinman would be awarded a separate contract as a senior management consultant for Radio Sawa.

BBG Executive Director Brian Conniff administered that contract as the authorized representative of the contracting officer. In reviewing the contract files, OIG also

determined that the deliverables listed in that contract agreement had not been fully provided or documented, which is contrary to the Federal Acquisition Regulation.

Bid Procedures Are Not Followed

BBG and Radio Sawa officials did not follow standard procedures for bid solicitations to make contracts available for competition, and these officials also have awarded several sole-source contracts when competition may have been appropriate. OIG found that BBG entered into a contract with Dalet Digital Media Systems to upgrade the VOA's broadcasting equipment and software from an analog to a digital system. The original contract called for installation of new equipment in existing VOA facilities, to complete a conversion to digital equipment. The equipment upgrade was to have been completed by February 2002. The contract was subsequently modified, however, to include a designbuild modification to construct a new overseas regional news center (MEPC) at a remote location at an additional cost of \$2.9 million. The contract modification changed the scope to add new construction to an equipment and software installation project. OIG believes the modification should have been prepared as a new procurement and competed. The BBG Office of Procurement, however, has steadfastly disagreed with OIG's analysis. In a meeting with OIG, the senior procurement executive brought OIG's attention to 14 clearance signatures on the modification document, including that of the BBG counsel, as evidence all was in order.

The rationale to rush the construction of the news center was to remove Washington as the center for regional programming and provide a regional hub for Middle East programming. This has not been achieved. The modifications, adding construction and the subsequent change in buildings due to security concerns, added over a year to the initiation of operations at the hub. The majority of Radio Sawa broadcasting still emanates from the Washington studios. However, the MEPC is responsible for one of the three Radio Sawa news cycles (12:15 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. Washington time, that is eastern daylight time) and is performing as a regional hub for several functions and programs.

[INSERT PHOTO 2: MEPC]

Photo 2: Radio Sawa Broadcaster in MEPC Studio Booth

Questionable Practices

The former MEPC news director contract managing editor told OIG that IBB employed him using several purchase orders in amounts ranging from \$99,500 to \$110,000 to perform the same work but over different periods. The former news director managing editor, being unfamiliar with the forms, considered these documents to be contracts. When queried about this, the former news director managing editor told OIG that a Radio Sawa official told him they were trying to circumvent the requirement to compete the position. By keeping the amount under \$100,000, IBB could hire personnel immediately, without going through the longer competitive-bidding process.

During its review, OIG found that there were efforts by Radio Sawa officials to prevent the former MEPC news director managing editor from meeting with OIG, after his sudden departure from that position. He told OIG that he was specifically directed by Radio Sawa management to have no contact with OIG during its field visit. As an apparent incentive to encourage his immediate departure and silence, he received five months salary and was awarded a month of annual leave for approximately two months of work. He said he was told he could either resign and receive the incentive package or be fired with no compensation. However, Radio Sawa advised OIG that the MEPC news director managing editor was released because of disagreements relating to editing.

Security Challenges and Poor Planning Delay the MEPC Launch

Other problems occurred with regard to establishing MEPC. Radio Sawa did not coordinate well with the Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security or with the regional security officer (RSO) in Dubai regarding security for the establishment of the MEPC. Under the terms of the May 15, 2001, Memorandum of Understanding between

UNCLASSIFIED

50

the Department and BBG concerning overseas security support, the RSO is responsible for surveying the physical, technical, and procedural security of BBG personnel and facilities. All new office buildings or office space, according to 12 FAM 300, must conform to the physical security standards of 12 FAH. If one or more standards cannot be met, exceptions are provided for in 12 FAM 314.

The initial, and then-unbuilt, office building selected for the MEPC contained underground parking in its design and was chosen and leased without an adequate security survey being conducted by either the local RSO or BBG's security section. In May 2002, during a subsequent site visit that included a BBG security officer, the RSO and BBG realized that the building had underground parking. However, it was then determined that the building could be used if there were vehicle inspections and controlled access to the parking garage. The landlord agreed to the conditions, and a security waiver attesting to those conditions was issued. However, the landlord later reneged on the agreement to permit vehicle inspections, and it became necessary to search for another building.

Similarly, during a recent visit to a news bureau in the region, where Radio Sawa is collected with VOA, OIG found that no site security survey had been conducted there before BBG had leased these offices about a year earlier.

MEPC's Role as the Regional Broadcast Hub Is Not Yet Achieved

The Middle East Programming Center in Dubai was proposed to serve as the production hub of program origination, which consists of news, in-depth news analysis, and audience-participation programs, such as call-in and discussion shows and a "Speak Your Mind" hotline. OIG found that security failures, construction delays, staffing problems, technical challenges, and organizational chaos led to delays in the MEPC's operations. Thus, most programming for Radio Sawa continues to originate from Washington.

⁴⁷ Reaching the Middle East: A NewBroadcasting Opportunity, pp. 14-15.

Although it was to be the hub for Middle East programming, as of April 2004, MEPC was airing a little over six hours of programming out of the entire nonmusic Radio Sawa broadcast week of approximately 38 hours. However, as mentioned above, the MEPC is responsible for one of three eight-hour news cycles of Radio Sawa and is performing as a regional hub for several functions and programs such as SawaChat.

Because of communication problems and technical challenges, the role and mission of the MEPC was unclear, resulting in staff morale problems and poor coordination between Dubai and Washington, and among the journalists and stringers.

The lack of clear definition of the role of MEPC regarding Radio Sawa has resulted in a fragmented approach to the region's programming. Two former Radio Sawa officials interviewed by OIG believed that these problems contributed to underutilization of the Dubai MEPC facility. However, BBG advised OIG that with Radio Sawa moving into the MTN grantee, a TV facility will be constructed in the MEPC. That should result in the MEPC no longer being under utilized.

Managing the Build-out in Iraq

Prior to OIG's going to the field, congressional staffers of the House International Relations Committee asked OIG to determine the status of a number of FM transmitters that had been shipped from the United States for deployment to Iraq. When OIG visited the Kuwait Transmitting Station, it found several pallets of transmitters in a warehouse and crates of antennas and related material stored out in the open. These items had been in Germany and then Kuwait for over six months. Radio Sawa managers stated that they had asked the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the U.S. military to move the transmitters, without success. Board Chairman Kenneth Tomlinson also stated that he had personally written an appeal to the Department of Defense (DoD) for assistance in transporting the equipment into Iraq. However, while in Kuwait, OIG's own direct contact with those who arrange convoys from Kuwait to Iraq indicated that there was no problem in having the transmitters included as part of a U.S. military convoy or in setting

up a convoy solely for the transportation of transmitters. BBG has advised OIG that the transportations solution suggested by the mid-level DoD contacts OIG made in the field did not adequately consider the necessary security and logistics arrangements for transporting the equipment in a hostile environment. OIG does not dispute that BBG assessment. BBG ultimately chose to use contractors for its own transportation, security, and installation at other sites, which so far have included Basra and Mosul.

[INSERT PHOTO 3: FM TRANSMITTER PALLETS]

Photo 3: Pallets of FM Transmitters for Iraq Stored in Kuwait

The original plan was to install 20 pairs of FM transmitters around Iraq, pairing Radio Sawa and VOA FM transmitters on the same antenna mast. OIG recognizes the difficulty of the working environment in Iraq. Among the initial delays in the rollout of the Iraq FM strategy were arranging for CPA to assign radio frequencies, gaining Department of Defense support for transportation and security, and finding volunteers at a time when staff were concerned that the war was still underway. OIG was told by BBG that security and U.S. military cooperation also delayed the buildout in Iraq. However, BBG has also cataloged extensive cooperation with DoD and the CPA in support of its broadcasting mission in Iraq.

In the end, Radio Sawa gained a large audience in Iraq, in part, because IBB blanketed the country with a strong medium-wave signal from Kuwait and used two of the 20 FM transmitters in Baghdad. After the Baghdad installation, contractors subsequently installed a pair of transmitters in Basra and Mosul. However, *The Basra transmitters went out of service in-April 23-29, 2004, when their antenna collapsed. A permanent repair was made May 28, 2004. At the time of OIG's field visit, IBB had been able to install IBB-owned FM transmitters in Baghdad and had leased FM transmitters in the northern cities of Irbil and Sulemanjiah. A question remains about the permanency of the CPA-granted FM frequencies, aAfter June 28, 2004, when the Transitional Iraqi Administration assumed power from the CPA as the sovereign interim Iraqi government.

According to BBG, licenses continue in an interim status with the interim government while IBB works to protect the agency's interests and pursues negotiations with the Iraqi Iraq Media Network regarding possible collaboration in a partnership for mutual benefit.

Shortcomings in How Staff Were Hired

The Radio Sawa staff director told OIG that the process for hiring stringers was determined by the news director, who interviewed candidates, listened to voice presentations, and administered written tests. The criteria, according to the Staff Director, were that candidates " be able to draft and speak." Some of the stringers suggested hiring colleagues for the positions, and these persons were, in turn, interviewed and recommended to senior Radio Sawa management as candidates for positions in their sections. The Radio Sawa news director and managing editors made final hiring decisions. OIG compared the process used by Radio Sawa for hiring contract broadcasters and stringers with that followed by IBB in the selection and hiring of international radio broadcasters, who have equivalent skill sets, and found Radio Sawa's process lacking. IBB knows the testing and selection process for international broadcasters and could have provided expert assistance, but Radio Sawa management never sought assistance from BBG's Office of Personnel. When OIG asked if stringers had to undergo tests similar to those that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) required of all VOA correspondents and broadcasters, Radio Sawa officials said they were not familiar with OPM standards. Several Radio Sawa staff in the field complained to OIG about the lack of professionalism and poor skills demonstrated by some of the stringers and recommended that many of them needed to receive training to enhance their broadcast skills or be terminated. OIG believes the Radio Sawa hiring process may have been marred by favoritism toward Lebanese candidates or candidates of Lebanese ancestry. For example, of 34 full-time-equivalent positions filled at Radio Sawa, OIG was told by interlocutors that 11 were filled by persons that were either Lebanese or of Lebanese ancestry. (BBG maintains that the number is only five.) This affected Radio

Sawa's ability to present distinct broadcast streams. ⁴⁸ An examination of personnel files at the MEPC in Dubai also revealed a disproportionate presence of persons of Lebanese origin.

Stringer Training Is Ad Hoc; Style Manual Is Still Under Development

Stringer training is generally done on the job, according to managers. The Board Chairman said Radio Sawa's broadcasters and stringers did not need a stylebook or training, but Radio Free Asia, by contrast, values training for its stringers and broadcasters. During its October to November 2003 fieldwork, OIG found that the broadcasters at MEPC and in Cairo, Amman, and Jerusalem had no stylebooks. Radio Sawa senior officials told OIG they feared a style book would fall into the hands of Radio Sawa's detractors and be used to embarrass the network. However, style books were later distributed to the field in May 2004.

Licensing Agreements Are Not Properly Validated

BBG's strategic objectives require that there be expansion, through the installation of new transmitter sites and the negotiation of new broadcast radio frequencies with host nations of the region. The ability to secure licensing arrangements requires close cooperation between Radio Sawa, the Department, and the host government. However, Radio Sawa officials have not consistently coordinated the licensing arrangements they were seeking. OIG also found that BBG negotiations for licensing agreements with host governments for the installation of transmitters and for broadcasting frequencies were not always properly negotiated.

In one case, a unilateral negotiation with an FM licensee resulted in improper broadcasts, according to the competent licensing authority. U.S. diplomats for the area

⁴⁸ According to Radio Sawa, a stream is a unique 24/7 radio station that is broadcast on one or more transmitters to a specific geographical part of the Middle East. The streams are tailored for the linguistic, cultural, and informational situation in each area.

did not take the BBG position that it was sufficient that BBG had a sublease with a station that had a valid license. OIG believes this played a role in delaying Radio Sawa's establishing an FM station in another highly desirable location of that authority. Recently, when the MEPC director worked closely with Consulate General Jerusalem, this issue was resolved.

The lack of a formal licensing agreement in Kuwait might could have posed a risk that the Kuwaiti government could shut down Radio Sawa's FM station in the capital, Kuwait City. Radio Sawa initiated FM broadcasts there, based on verbal and written indications of Kuwaiti intentions, but failed to complete a formal amendment of an existing bilateral agreement until pressed by OIG to do so. With the assistance of Embassy Kuwait City, a formal amendment to an existing bilateral agreement was concluded by an exchange of notes completed XXXX 2004. Additionally, questions remain unanswered about Radio Sawa's conversion from a federal entity to private corporation grantee status, and specifically, whether existing licensing agreements will require renegotiation because of that change.

Another unanswered question is the status of radio frequencies granted by the CPA after the June 28, 2004, transfer of power to the Transitional Iraqi Administration.

Recommendation 9: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should work closely with the Department to complete the negotiation and processing of licensing agreements and the placement of transmitters and to formalize lease agreements supporting expansion of the Radio Sawa transmission distribution network.

Objective 3: Determine the Extent to Which Radio Sawa Has Implemented the Recommendations in OIG's 2002 Survey of MERN.

⁴⁹ OIG Report of Inspection, *International Broadcasting Bureau's Kuwait Transmitting Station*, Report Number IBO-I-04-04, March 2004, pp. 3-5.

In March 2002, OIG issued a report in response to a congressional request that it review the BBG's broadcast activities in the Middle East. The report contained three recommendations, one concerning the Department and two related to BBG.

Compliance with OIG's MERN Report Recommendations

BBG has partially implemented one of two recommendations from OIG's first MERN survey, conducted in 2002,⁵⁰ but BBG decided against implementing the recommendation to use language-qualified Public Diplomacy advisers as resources for network management. OIG believed these advisers would honor BBG's "firewall" of journalistic independence, possess area experience, and could have mitigated problems with regard to obtaining broadcast licenses and transmitter sites and other issues encountered by Radio Sawa officials. These advisers could also create an environment of sensitivity and awareness with respect to the presentation of U.S. policies in the region.

OIG recommended that BBG design and implement a program, in coordination with the Department, to place Public Diplomacy advisers from the Department with MERN at the disposition of the MERN program director in Washington, D.C., or the MEPC in Dubai. BBG chose not to implement the recommendation. Public Diplomacy advisers may have helped mitigate the problems Radio Sawa had in obtaining approval for its licensing agreements for frequencies. Language-qualified Public Diplomacy advisers with area experience would improve the presentation of U.S. policy by providing information and guidance on foreign policy issues. BBG has resisted having Public Diplomacy advisers, however, considering use of them to be a breach of the "firewall" that prevents influencing the news coverage. However, BBG lost that area and diplomatic expertise when USIA merged with the Department and USIA's Foreign Service officers, who had area expertise and the ability to serve as in-house advisors, moved to the Department.

⁵⁰ Survey of the Broadcasting Board of Governors' Middle East Broadcasting Activities and Initiatives, Report No. IBO-A-02-01, March 2002.

The International Broadcasting Act of 1994 requires that broadcasts, U.S. international broadcasting is required by 22 USC 6202 to "be consistent with the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States" and include "clear and effective presentation of the policies of the United States Government and responsible discussion and opinion on those policies." The Act was later amended by the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 to add "including editorials, broadcast by the Voice of America, which present the views of the United States Government."51 Further, the MERN conceptual framework states that "U.S. policies and official views...are articulated and explained in specially designed editorials." Radio Sawa has not met the provisions of this congressional mandatethe Act or its own commitment.; it It fails to has not presented official U.S. government editorials articulating U.S. policy in the traditional format used by VOA, choosing instead to label such action as "propaganda." Having Public Diplomacy advisers at MERN would function in a manner similar to having political advisers provided by the Department to unified theater military commanders. OIG emphasized that MERN advisers would have no editorial or managerial control, but would provide working-level input that, coupled with the Department's vigorous use of its seat on the Board, could provide additional assurance that official views were being heard and communicated. MERN advisers would be selected on the basis of requirements developed by BBG.⁵² Although assigned to MERN, these advisers would function as members of the MERN staff, reporting to and receiving annual performance ratings from either MERN or MEPC. BBG could select candidates based on their skills, their knowledge of the region, its culture, and languages, and their expertise in and sensitivity to journalistic issues. Even after Radio Sawa becomes a grantee, arrangements could be worked out for using these advisers, similar to what is done with the American Institute in Taiwan or in some other arrangement. However, in 2002, BBG rejected OIG's recommendation as a final agency decision and OIG is not resubmitting the recommendation.

⁵⁴ 22 U.S.C. Chapter 71, Sec. 6202

⁵² Survey of the Broadcasting Board of Governors' Middle East Broadcasting Activities and Initiatives (OIG Report No. IBO-A-02-02, Mar. 2003).

The second OIG recommendation was that it should design and implement a plan to introduce as much news programming in MERN broadcasts as possible as quickly as possible. Radio Sawa significantly expanded the duration of newscasts at the beginning of the Iraq war. However, it reduced news programming after major combat operations ended, although combat increased as coalition casualties mounted and the date for the turnover of authority drew nearer. Some VOA managers told OIG they believed Radio Sawa should have been gradually introducing more challenging content. As OIG documented earlier, the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World reported that BBG's "nearly single minded objective for [Radio] Sawa to build an audience" might have deterred it from adding more influential content. This could have taken the form of more news and information or time spent telling America's story and offering a clear and effective presentation of U.S. policies or responsible discussion and opinion on these policies. OIG acknowledges that Radio Sawa, since its inception, has gradually added more content to its program mix. However, on this issue, OIG concurs with the assessments of some VOA managers, the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, and other interested media observers in the federal government that OIG interviewed.

These recommendations from the initial review remain valid and, in light of the findings during the current review, merit additional consideration.



Recommendation 1: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should design and implement measurable performance indicators in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act, as part of a meaningful performance review process to evaluate Radio Sawa's effectiveness and ensure the quality of

its program delivery. These performance indicators should include those used by other agency entities, including program quality, signal strength, target audiences, Internet use, and awareness.

Recommendation 2: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should ensure that the Office of Research validates and verifies performance indicators used in the evaluation of Radio Sawa.

Recommendation 3: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should develop a comprehensive action plan for completing full implementation of the mandate in the Foreign Affairs Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2002-2003, which requires that BBG devote significant resources for post-broadcast analysis at Radio Sawa, ensuring that programs promote democratic values and support United States interests in the Middle East.

Recommendation 4: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should design and implement a plan at Radio Sawa for the selection and hiring of language-qualified broadcasters and stringers to meet the highest professional, journalistic, and broadcast standards.

Recommendation 5: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should ensure that the Office of Research institutes a more rigorous, comprehensive study to measure Radio Sawa's impact on the attitudes of audiences in the Middle East and describe in detail the survey research undertaken to measure audience attitudes and changing views of the United States since the network's launch. The study should also include detailed analysis on the research design and data collection methodology and explain the process for the collection and reporting of reliable results.

Recommendation 6: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should ensure that measures are implemented to show Radio Sawa's progress in supporting the war

on terrorism, including a detailed explanation of how survey research is conducted and what methodology is used for interpreting results. There should also be updates on Radio Sawa's strategic objectives and actions to extend the penetration of coverage and deployment of medium-wave and FM transmitters to cross borders and reach audiences throughout the Middle East, particularly in nations that sponsor terrorism or have active terrorist organizations operating on their soil or populations of more than five million.

Recommendation 7: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should ensure that Radio Sawa develops and implements a system of administrative procedures, organizational guidelines, operational policies, and management controls to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively in support of operations and in accordance with the Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act and Office of Management and Budget Circular No. A-123.

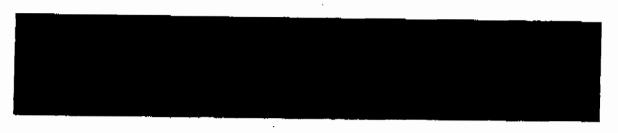
Recommendation 8: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should ensure that all Radio Sawa staff responsible for negotiating, administering, signing, and monitoring contracts are fully certified and warranted in accordance with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act and Office of Federal Procurement Policy Letters 92-3 and 97-01, to assure that the government's best interests are protected.

Recommendation 9: The Broadcasting Board of Governors should work closely with the Department to complete the negotiation and processing of licensing agreements and the placement of transmitters and to formalize lease agreements supporting expansion of the Radio Sawa transmission distribution network.

ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
DoD	Department of Defense
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FMFIA	Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
IBB	International Broadcasting Bureau
MEPC	Middle East Programming Center
MERN	Middle East Radio Network
OFPP	Office of Federal Procurement Policy
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
RSO	Regional Security Officer
USIA	United States Information Agency
UAE	United Arab Emirates
VOA	Voice of America

Draft UNCLASSIFIED



Universal Time Code	Dubai Time	News Event Longth (Minutes)	Distribution*
0015	4:15 AM	10:00	L, G, M, E, I
0045	4:45 AM	1:30	L, G, M, E, I
0115	5:15 AM	10:00	I., G, M, E, I
0145	5:45 AM	1:30	L, G, M, E, I
0215	6:15 AM	10:00	I., G, M, E, I
0245	6:45 AM	1:30	L, G, M, E, I
0315	7:15 AM	30:00	L, G, M, E, I
0345	7:45 AM	1:30	L, G, M, E, I
0415	8:15 AM	10:00	L, G, M, E, I
0445	8:45 AM	1:30	L, G, M, E, I
0515	9:15 AM	10:00	L, G, M, E, I
0545	9:45 AM	1:30	L, G, M, E, I
0615	10:15 AM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I
0645	10:45 AM	1:30	L, G, M, E, I
0715	11:15 AM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I
0745	11:45 AM	1:30	G, M, E, I
0815	12:15 PM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I
0845	12:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I
0915	1:15 PM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I
0945	1:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I
1015	2:15 PM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I
1045	2:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I
1115	3:15 PM	15:00	L, G, M, E, I
1145	3:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I
1215	4:15 PM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I
1245	4:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I
1315	5:15 PM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I
1345	5:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I
1415	6:15 PM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I
1445	6:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I
1515	7:15 PM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I
1545	7:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I
1615	8:15 PM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I
1645	8:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I
		10:00	Iraq
1715	9:15 PM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I

Universal Time Code	Dubai Time	News Event Length (Minutes)	Distribution*	
1745	9:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I	
		1:45	Iraq	
1815	10:15 PM	15:00	L, G, M, E, I	
		30:00	Iraqi	
1845	10:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I	
1915	11:15 PM	5:00	L, G, M, E, I	
		15:00	Ĭraq	
1945	11:45 PM	1:30	G, M, E, I	
2015	12:15 AM	10:00	L, G, M, E, I	
2045	12:45 AM	1:30	G, M, E, I	
2115	1:15 AM	10:00	L, G, M, E, I	
2145	1:45 AM	1:30	G, M, E, I	
2215	2:15 AM	10:00	L, G, M, E, I	
2245	2:45 AM	1:30	G, M, E, I	
2315	3:15 AM	10:00	L, G, M, E, I	
2345	3:45 AM	1:30	G, M, E, I	

Legend

L = Lovent

G = Gulf

M = Morocco

E = Egypt

I - Ireq

Note 1. There are 51:45 more minutes of news broadcasts daily on the Iraq stream than the Gulf, Levant, Morocco, and Egypt streams.

Note 2. The Levent stream has the least amount of news broadcasted daily with 25:30 minutes less than the Guif, Morocco, and Egypt streams.

Note 3. News broadcasts appear to be the lightest from 9:15 a.m. to 8:45 p.m. Dubai time (0515 UTC to 1656 UTC).

^{*} Radio Sawa did not list Sudan. This latest stream began broadcasting on April 1, 2004.

SAWA Stream				-					
	Transmission	City	Emanates	Power	pected	Preg	Si	Qua	Installation Comments
VA Levant	Satellite	11/1	B/S	D/s		n/s			3/22/2002 Nilcont and Arabust
	Interest	n/s	Washington			n/s			2/2004 24/7 live stream
ordes	FM	Ammen	Ammen		10	98.1			3/22/2002 Reaches into the West Benk
•	FM	Aiko	Ailun	20	1	107.4			9/8/2003 Reaches northern Israel and &
TYTE.				_	•	107.7			s) of ways treaches instructor thinks mig of
ebenon									1
West Bank	FM	Ramallah	Recredish	3	3	94.2			7/5/2003
Geza I									
		· ·							
AWA Iraq	Internet	π/a	Washington	9/8					2003 schedule on a scale of 1-5
ue.	MW	n/s	Kumait	4/E	1	n/a 1548	n/		1/2003 24/? Eve stream
	747 44	14.8	N. Line St.	900		1346	 /	day Niebt	4/28/2002
"	FM	Bashdad	Buebded	1	1	100.4	7.2		\$/12/2003
	FM	Busin	Bears	i	i	107			11/14/2005
	FM	Mossi	Mosul	ī	ī	106.6			5/20/2004
	FM.	Irbii	lebi	6	3	93.3			4/1/2003 Currently via lease agreement
	FM	Salaimeniae	<u>b Subinaciach</u>	1		101.7			4/6/2003 Comments via losse seminores
7	-	,							
A Egypt	Internet MW		Washington	2/1	_	A/a		.	6/2002 24/7 live atreem
Mak	vet AA	n/s	Сурень	600	. 2	990	3.3	day	9/11/2002 Roschus Alexandria and the
	MW	n/s	Rhodes	600	1	1260	7.7	Night	coast of Egypt 24/7; all Egypt at rig 4/21/2002 On sir 17 hours daily, same reach:
	10E W	11/8	Warnings	and.		1200	45	day Night	Cyrons MW during on-six hours.
A Gulf									
uwait	FM	Kurmit City	Kuweit City	5	1	95.7			1/15/2003
ahain	FM	Mename	Manama	1	1	29.2			12/7/2002 Reaches eastern province of Saudi
AE	PM FM	Doha Abu Dhahi	Doha Abu Dhabi	2 10	ļ	926			7/1/3002
VE.	PM FM	Duhai	Dubei	5	3	98.7 90.5			4/14/2002 4/14/2002
wdi Ambia	I.ME	15000	Dimin	2	3	24.5		•	Behrein FM staches certern province
									CONTRACTOR OF THE PARTY AND TH
A North Africa									
(decoppe)	FM	Camblenes	Capablanca.	1	1	101.5			9/26/2003
	FM	Rabet	Raime	1	1	101			8/21/2003
	FM	Timper Manufach	Tangler	1	1	101.			12/16/2003
	FM PM	Manukech Agadir	Macrakech Aundir	I. T	1	101. 8 101			5/15/2004 Expected installation and on sir date 7/15/2004 Expected installation and on sir date
	. FM. FM.	Agener Pes	Agedia Pen	1	1	101.6		4	//15/2004 Expected installation and on air date
	FM	Makan	Mekron	i	i	101.2		ź	//17/2004 Expected insullation and on air date
	7 870		. 	-	•			•	, — —
geria									
bys.					_				
A Sudan	MOV D	Sibouti É	jibouti	600	2	1413	۵/	2/4	4/1/2004
			•						· • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •
den		<u>. </u>				·			<u> </u>
•									
ponti	FM	Actu	Arts	5	1	100.8		12	218/2002 Also reaches Aden
Men									
· 									•

On April 1 and 3, 2004, OIG convened at separate locations, two independent panels to review the quality of selected Radio Sawa broadcasts. Panelists chosen were highly credentialed experts, possessing advanced and postgraduate education and expertise in Arabic linguistics, literature, journalism, anthropology with a concentration in Middle East studies or teaching Arabic as a foreign language. Additional disciplines represented included Arabic language education and Semitic languages. Almost all possessed skills in Arabic-to-English translation, and the majority have Ph.D.s. All panelists had lived in the region from 23 to 40 years and had resided or spent considerable time living and working in places such as Kuwait, Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, U.A.E., Jerusalem, and Morocco. All panel members were native speakers. All panel members were U.S. government direct-hire or contract employees. They possessed expert knowledge of the language streams and dialects that they reviewed.

The participants listened to compact disks containing music, programming, and news broadcasts on three of Radio Sawa's six news streams in the region that were aired on December 13 and 14, 2003. Evaluated were the Iraq stream, the Levant stream, and the Morocco stream. Before either of the research projects began, the participants were strictly advised that they were not to comment on news content at all, but were to pay close attention to the delivery of programs with regard to grammar, clarity, style of presentation, syntax, and pronunciation as well as share their overall general impressions and observations on matters not related to content. After listening to the material provided, participants were asked to complete a brief questionnaire concerning these areas.

All panel members provided summary statements after listening and noting what they had heard, and almost all identified grammatical mistakes and mispronunciations throughout the broadcasts. After listening to the Radio Sawa broadcasts, there was clear consensus between the two panels on the need for major improvements in how broadcasters and stringers deliver programs and pronounce words.

OIG learned that English was occasionally translated incorrectly, and the wrong Arabic word was used at times, thus making the message unclear and confusing. Some participants added that the newscasts overall did not come close to other Arabic competitors. Additional matters of concern raised by the participants include hissing sounds and heavy breathing from the announcer's heavy breathing heard during the newscasts.

Both panels found that the stringers and broadcasters mispronounced names and titles of senior American and Middle Eastern officials, including President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, White House Press Spokesman Scott McClellan, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Some of the errors, such as switching "b" for the "p" sound, led to embarrassing results in the pronunciation and unintended meanings in Arabic of an official's name. In addition, there were other mispronunciations.

Some words and idiomatic phrases used in English are not easily translated into Arabic. As a result, some translations into Arabic had a different meaning from what was said in English. Other times, there was no Arabic translation provided for a statement in English. According to both panels, it seemed that the broadcasters were in a rush to return to the music, which may have contributed to mistakes being consistently made, such as the use of improper plural forms, wrong letter endings, lack of gender agreement, and lack of adjective and noun agreement.

The inappropriate manner in which the Shiite and Sunni sects were identified by broadcasters and stringers offended several members of both panels. They saw

comprehension of the news broadcasts being impaired by the speed of the broadcaster's delivery. The news broadcasts also suffered, according to panelists from both groups, from a lack of knowledge or understanding of cultural, economic, and social conditions in the region.

Several of the panelists noted that there were some potential cultural offenses.

One panelist noted that during one of the newscasts the truncated call to prayer heard in the background of the Iraqi stream could be offensive to Muslims. Another offense was the failure to use proper titles of officials. For example, addressing Egyptian President Mubarak in a newscast, without using his title "President," which is important in Egyptian culture. One also noted that the Lebanese dialect dominated the broadcast on the Iraq stream. Furthermore, the absence of a Moroccan dialect on the Moroccan stream was noticeable. In this regard, one participant explained, "It is condescending to use Levant terminology in the Morocco stream."

In the review session after the panelists had listened to the compact disks, there was a discussion of breaking news. Most of the participants commented that they heard news about the capture of Saddam Hussein, for example, however, the regular program schedule was not interrupted. Instead, such news was provided during the scheduled time and was treated as "significant" because interviews were included in those broadcasts and they were extended in duration. Radio Sawa's decision not to break into other programming was an editorial decision and, according to BBG, did not prevent Radio Sawa from being among the first news organizations to broadcast Saddam Hussein's capture.

Conclusion

When participants were asked for their general impression of what they had heard, some said good things, but also identified much room for improvement. Many participants said some of the stringers needed intensive training and that Radio Sawa should consider using a standardized stylebook. The participants also explained that many Arab radio and television stations employ a grammarian to preview scripts, minimizing the likelihood of

errors. One participant said grammarians are routinely used on Sudanese television. The panelists generally agreed that the pace of reading and speaking must slow, which could improve the problems with pronunciation of Arabic and English words.

Quality Assurance Panel Findings and Comments on Radio Sawa

- As for professionalism, "Sawa does not compare to Al-Jazeera."
- There was strong Lebanese influence in the language of the news reporting on the Morocco stream, which could be viewed as condescending and indicate there is no strategy to accommodate other Arabic dialects.
- Many of the mistakes were "humiliating for Arabic speakers."
- News was interrupted by music, or an interviewee started to speak, but was interrupted in mid-sentence.
- American names "were tortured and distorted."
- There was low and poor sound quality of the news and the high, clear and good quality of the background music and music breaks. The music drowned out the news.
- Radio Sawa broadcasters and stringers represented a mixed bag in terms of skills.
 Some were very good, some adequate, and others were described as "greenhorns" and "real amateurs." Participants said America is "capable of doing better than this."
- Improper use of and changing of the preposition was changing the whole meaning of a statement.
- When Ambassador Paul Bremer announced the capture of Saddam Hussein, no
 one translated the phrase, "We got him." Audiences could be at a loss as to what
 this means.



OIG contracted a statistical and survey research expert to examine the collection and validity of audience research data used to evaluate the credibility and impact of Radio Sawa programming, including data compiled by ACNielson and Pew. Survey results for these two research organizations noted differences in respondents' favorability toward the United States. OIG's contractor was asked to examine the possible factors contributing to differences between the ACNielson and Pew survey data.

The Pew Global Attitudes Project is a worldwide public opinion survey conceived "to gauge attitudes in every region...and to measure attitudes towards democracy and other key issues." After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the project was broadened to measure attitudes about terrorism, the intersection between Islamic faith and public policy in countries with significant Muslim populations, and to more deeply probe attitudes towards the United States in all countries.

ACNielsen's study, conducted <u>primarily</u> to create a baseline for future assessment of Radio Sawa's impact, was based on interviews conducted during the first two weeks of April 2002 among 1,150 randomly selected adults ever the age of 15 years of age and <u>older</u> in Amman, Jordan. The survey asked questions about media and music habits and preferences, trust in media, interest in news and current affairs, Internet access and use, and attitudes toward the West. The OIG contractor provided the table below and the

discussion that follow on possible factors contributing to differences between the two survey results.

In the Pew study, nine nations were surveyed; Jordan was the only nation that was also in the ACNielsen study. Table D below is OIG's contractor comparison of the results regarding respondents' favorability toward the United States.

Table D: Comparison of the Survey Results in Jordan Regarding Respondents'
Favorability Toward the United States

	ACNielsen	Pew			
Favorability	July-August 2003 ^a	May 2003	March 2004		
Favorable	21.6%	1%	5%		
Neither favorable nor					
unfavorable	15.4%	Not applicable	Not applicable		
Somewhat unfavorable	8.1%	16%	26%		
Very unfavorable	54.9%	83%	67%		

^a Excluding refusals and don't know comments.

Source: OIG contractor analysis from BBG data and Pew data.

OIG's contractor found several factors that might contribute to the differences in the survey results. First, the differences in sampling strategy could produce differences. If any of the samples was skewed toward a certain subpopulation group, the survey estimates could be systematically biased with regard to favorability. For example, if the ACNielsen sample contained a higher proportion of younger people (based on weighted data) than the Pew sample, the survey estimates from the ACNielsen study could be more positive than those from the Pew study. Because the Pew report only mentioned that the survey was based on "a nationally representative sample," there is inadequate information to make comparisons between the sampling strategies of the two studies and to identify their differences.

Second, the order of the questions in the survey questionnaires could be another contributing factor. In the Pew surveys, the favorability question was the second question asked, soliciting peoples' spontaneous responses. In the ACNielsen survey, however, the favorability question was placed toward the end of the questionnaire, following all of the questions about respondents' foreign media use (e.g., Radio Sawa and BBC) and their opinions about these media. These preceding questions could serve to build up some pro-Western sentiment and lead to more favorable opinions about the United States.

Third, the wording of the favorability question was not identical in the two surveys. In the Pew survey, the question was worded: "Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the United States." In the ACNielsen survey, the question was worded: "Some people like certain countries more than others. Thinking specifically about the United States, how favorably or unfavorably inclined are you personally toward the U.S?"

Again, the Pew question was more likely to solicit spontaneous responses whereas the ACNielsen question prompted more thinking by respondents before answering it.

Moreover, by using the words "inclined" and "personally," the ACNielsen question is less direct than the one used in the Pew study.

Fourth, the response categories were different for the favorability questions used in the two studies. In the ACNielsen study, the response categories are "very favorably inclined," "somewhat favorably inclined," "neither favorable nor unfavorable," "somewhat unfavorably inclined," and "very unfavorably inclined." The Pew study did not have the neutral category, nor the word "inclined." In the ACNielsen study, 15.4 percent of respondents chose the neutral category. Most may have held an unfavorable feeling toward the United States but did not want to express it. Without the neutral category, they might have been forced to choose one of the unfavorable categories.

Finally, the difference in the timing of the surveys might also contribute to the differences in the opinions because any change in the environment could cause change in people's opinions. In this case, the differences between the Pew and Nielsen studies would reflect a true change.

The analyses of OIG's contracted statistical and survey research expert and an OIG statistician⁵³ identified numerous inaccuracies and discrepancies in the Radio Sawa Research Survey design and results. The key findings of the two experts, from BBG's presentation to Congress, Alhurra and Radio Sawa: Progress Report, April 2004, are presented below.

Sample Bias

Selection Bias. BBG's presentation claims the survey data collected by InterMedia in July-August 2003 and February-March 2004 represents the whole of the six studied countries for Radio Sawa. However, in four countries 100 percent of the sample had been selected from urban areas and in one of the remaining two countries 90 percent of the sample was selected from an urban area. This means the survey results could be biased, due to under representation of rural areas. The BBG presentation does not explain why the same countries were not sampled for both Alhurra (television) and Radio Sawa. Also, it is unclear why the BBG surveyors sampled different countries for Alhurra and Radio Sawa.

Self-selection Blas. Listeners who are more disposed to trust the radio stations they listen to may be inflating Radio Sawa's credibility ratings. However, BBG's surveyors can control for this by comparing Radio Sawa's ratings with those of the BBC, Radio Monte Carlo, and one or more of the most listened to local stations in each country; among listeners with similar background characteristics, such as ago, gender, and education. In addition, the listeners used for comparison should be those who listened to the relevant

⁵³ The contractor had 16 years of experience in program evaluation and survey methodology while working on more than 50 federal, state, commercial, and international projects and the OIG statistician had 27 years of experience as an auditor and statistician.

radio stations in the past 12 months, including both current and past listeners. The inclusion of multi-station listeners who tune in to Radio Sawa, the BBC, and the most popular local station would also control for the effect of listeners' predisposition to trust the station they listened to.

Imprecise Data Use

Unweighted Averages. The use of unweighted averages in the BBG survey appears inappropriate because of the great difference in population size between the nations studied. Using a weighted mean may be more accurate. In addition, the BBG surveyors should change the unweighted average for "non-listeners" titled "Views of the USA among Radio Sawa Listeners and Non-Listeners" from its incorrect calculation of 24 percent to 22 percent.

Mixed Sampling Results. According to BBG's April 2004 presentation, the surveyors used 2004 underlying Radio Sawa data for five of the countries and 2003 underlying data for the remaining country (Qatar), creating a time discrepancy of over six months.

Mixing sampling results in this manner can undermine the quality of data. Also, eCloser scrutiny of sample sizes allotted to the six studied countries incorrectly showeds that four some countries' sample size numbers are were erroneously from 2003 surveys, giving the impression 2003 data was used for other countries besides Qatar, one country's numbers are from 2004 (Morocco), and one country's numbers cannot be matched to data from either year (Kurwait). As a result, this information, found at the last page of the BBG presentation, contradicts the assertion on the first page of the presentation that data for the five nations cross from 2004 numbers.

Missing Categorization Data. BBG's presentation (April 2004) graphically depicts information on how reliable Radio Sawa listeners believe news and information is on a weekly basis. However, the underlying data for the presentation does not categorize this information on a weekly basis, but instead on a 12-month basis, and this distinction is important to the survey as a whole.—Also, BBG's presentation discussed how favorably

Radio Sawa listeners and non-listeners are inclined toward the United States. However, the underlying data apparently does not break out this information between listeners and non-listeners.

Missing Confidence Level. BBG's April 2004 presentation indicates a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 percent, but this information is meaningless without a stated confidence level.

Causal Inferences Versus Correlation

Unrecognized Reasons for Improvement. High numbers or improvements in Radio Sawa's listenership could be attributed to improved content of the station or to other factors, including improved promotion and improved reception. For example, 95 percent of Moroccan respondents indicated in the BBG survey that Radio Sawa reception is either excellent or good, but only 41 percent responded similarly for BBC London.

Inadequate Causal Link Between Rates of Listenership and Views of the United States. To properly measure Radio Sawa's impact in this area, BBG research needs to employ longitudinal survey data to examine differential rates of change in Radio Sawa listeners' views towards the United States and discover if there is a greater increase in favorability towards the United States from baseline point to the follow-up point among weekly listeners compared to annual listeners, or among annual listeners compared to non-listeners, controlling for baseline characteristics (such as age, gender, education, relevant attitudes and behaviors).

Inadequate Causal Link Between Radio Sawa Broadcasting and Progress in the War Against Terrorism. To appropriately gauge Radio Sawa's impact in this area, BBG research needs to measure repeatedly respondents' attitudes and behaviors towards terrorism and the war against terrorism, controlling for respondents' baseline characteristics and environmental factors.

