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United States Department of State
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors
Office of Inspector General

Report of Inspection

The Broadcasting Board of Governors' Operations in India

Report Number ISP-IB-05-66, August 2005

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- The New Delhi News Bureau serves as the Voice of America's (VOA) South Asia office and covering India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Bhutan. The bureau carries out its responsibilities well.
- The VOA South Asia office does not have a full video editing setup. This prevents the transmission of broadcast quality video via the Internet to VOA Washington and otherwise impedes the creative energy of its correspondent in the area of video journalism.
- The International Broadcasting Bureau's (IBB) Regional Technical Monitoring Office (TMO) is a lean and cost-effective operation that plays an active role in ensuring that U.S. government non-military radio broadcasting is well heard in the South Asia target area. OIG confirmed that this office provides excellent monitoring services.
- The two employees at the TMO do not have an American supervisor at post to authenticate the designation of responsibilities between the employees and to certify job reports after completion of the evaluations and IBB has not provided reference job descriptions to facilitate the evaluation process. As a result, Embassy New Delhi has not yet evaluated the two TMO positions in conjunction with the mission-wide evaluation of local employee position descriptions.

The purpose of this inspection was to assess the general operations at the VOA News Bureau and the IBB Regional Technical Monitoring Office, both located in New Delhi, India, including their program management, program performance, and management controls. The inspection took place in Washington, D.C., from January 7 to 28, 2005, and in New Delhi, India, from February 16 to 18, 2005. It was conducted in accordance with quality standards for inspections prescribed by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency by Senior Inspectors William Cavness, Andrea Leopold, and James Davies.

A previous Office of Inspector General (OIG) report that discussed BBG Operations in India was *Inspection of Embassy New Delhi, India and its Constituent Posts* (OIG Report No. ISP/I-99-23, August 1999).

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CONTEXT

India is the world's largest democracy and the largest English speaking country boasting a population in excess of one billion people. English is one of sixteen official languages in India. U.S. relations with India have not always been close due in part to Indian suspicions of warm U.S. relations with Pakistan, with whom India has fought three wars, and the history of India's entry into the club of nuclear powers. There is also a recurring refrain in Indian politics and media of the "foreign hand" interfering in the nation's affairs against that country's national interests. In a positive context, many Indians admire the United States and are proud of their sons and daughters that have immigrated to the United States and done well. Indeed, India has exported a stream of human capital to the United States in the fields of information technology, engineering, and medicine. Also, in recent years the U.S. - India bilateral relationship has grown decidedly warmer and stronger with cooperation extending to areas (military and intelligence) where there had been no relationship and with a number of high-level visits taking place.

In this context, BBG has established, in the capital city of New Delhi, a VOA News Bureau and an IBB Regional TMO. These offices have separate functions and do not interact. The VOA News Bureau is under the supervision of the VOA News Bureau in Hong Kong. The New Delhi TMO, supervised by IBB from Washington, D.C., is one of six such offices worldwide. The others are located in Vienna, Helsinki, Hong Kong, Manama, and Accra.

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PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

VOA NEWS BUREAU MANAGEMENT

Prior to departure for India, OIG had a brief meeting with the VOA Central Programming Directorate - the office that supports the news bureau - to discuss any issues warranting OIG attention. OIG heard that there were “no problems” in the New Delhi operation. In the course of the inspection, OIG concluded that this was indeed the case in regard to the operation of the bureau as it carries out its responsibilities. The New Delhi News Bureau serves as VOA’s South Asia office and covers India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Bhutan. (The VOA News Bureau in Islamabad handles Pakistan and Bangladesh.) The bureau chief is a newly hired correspondent in her first tour with VOA. She has substantial freelance and stringer experience in the region, including previous experience with VOA.

REGIONAL TECHNICAL MONITORING OFFICE MANAGEMENT

The two locally employed staff (LES) in New Delhi work as a highly effective team carrying out their own monitoring responsibilities and directing the monitoring of four contract monitors elsewhere in India (Calcutta, Karkala, Chennai, and Mumbai), a contract monitor in Sri Lanka, and an unmanned remote monitoring station in Nepal. The TMO regularly receives monitoring assignments from IBB for the New Delhi office and contract monitors and ensures that all monitoring assignments are met. The contract monitors submit their reports to TMO weekly. TMO confirms receipt, forwards the reports to IBB Washington, and arranges for the contractors to receive payment from IBB for their services. This arrangement is working smoothly. The TMO, IBB Washington, and the contract monitors communicate by e-mail and are in constant touch with each other. The TMO receives complete instructions from its Washington supervisory office on all monitoring requirements and conveys those instructions to the contract monitors and the remote monitoring site. Supervision and communication appear good at all levels.

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PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

VOA NEWS BUREAU PERFORMANCE

The news bureau is up-to-date on the technology front for radio and transmits broadcast-quality audio programs to VOA via the Internet. In light of growing interest in video programming targeted at Indian audiences, the correspondent may find that she will have new requirements in that area. The correspondent has the necessary skills to produce and transmit video programs. She currently produces an average of one video program per month and told OIG that she can do more. The office, however, does not have a full video editing setup, so the correspondent now uses her personal computer and own software to produce her video program. The bureau is unable to transmit the video electronically, and uses a courier service to send tape to VOA Washington. The need for courier service results in a three to four day delay in getting the product to Washington and so diminishes its news value. The correspondent told OIG that she is attempting to identify video compression software that will enable her to transmit broadcast quality video via the Internet to VOA Washington. In the meantime, this situation impedes the creative energy of the correspondent in the area of video journalism.

In discussing possible expanded video efforts, the correspondent said she would benefit from VOA television staff reactions to the technical quality and content of her productions. She added that the creation of a foreign desk for VOA television would assist her in identifying topics for coverage. The correspondent now makes all decisions on such things as subject matter and production timing.

REGIONAL TECHNICAL MONITORING OFFICE PERFORMANCE

IBB's regional TMO is a lean and cost-effective operation that plays an active role in ensuring that U.S. government non-military radio broadcasting is well heard in the South Asia target area. Washington survey discussions with the supervisor for the New Delhi TMO confirmed that this office provides excellent monitoring services. Weekly, it collects, analyzes, and distributes summary reports on tens of

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thousands of live monitoring observations and transmits several gigabytes of audio recordings and frequency usage data to IBB's spectrum management specialists in Washington.

In the course of monitoring operations, the TMO and the contract monitors immediately report via e-mail on reception problems, enabling transmitters to make adjustments to improve broadcast quality. TMO coverage includes IBB transmissions from VOA English and regional languages, Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Sawa of the Middle East Television Network, and Radio Farda, which is the VOA and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty joint venture targeted to the Iranian audience. For comparison purposes, the TMO also checks broadcasts from the British Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Deutsche Welle, and Radio Netherlands.

HUMAN RESOURCES

VOA NEWS BUREAU HUMAN RESOURCES

The VOA correspondent serving as the bureau chief directs a small Foreign Service national (FSN) staff that includes an FSN-8 information/administrative assistant and a contract driver (FSN-3 equivalent). Since the correspondent job requires constant travel, the bureau uses a stringer to cover India news in English while the correspondent is away. The correspondent receives reporting assignments from the VOA News Bureau in Hong Kong, financial management assistance from the VOA Financial Liaison Office in Bangkok, and technical assistance from the VOA News Bureau in London as well as from the VOA Hong Kong News Bureau, and VOA Washington.

VOA employs a network of stringers in India and elsewhere in South Asia for news coverage in languages other than English. The stringers receive their assignments and compensation directly from VOA. The correspondent bureau in New Delhi does not get involved in managing the stringers.

REGIONAL TECHNICAL MONITORING OFFICE HUMAN RESOURCES

The two employees of the TMO encumber FSN positions, with the supervisor graded at the FSN-9 level and his assistant at FSN-8. TMO subscribes to a set of support functions from the embassy under the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services framework, including human resources support. For the most part, these services meet the needs of TMO. However, the embassy human resources office has not yet evaluated the two TMO LES positions in conjunction with the mission-wide evaluation of local employee position descriptions. According to the human resources office, the embassy recognizes the requirement to evaluate the positions, but notes that the two employees do not have an American supervisor at post to authenticate the designation of responsibilities between the employees and to certify the job reports after completion of the evaluations. IBB Washington has not provided reference job descriptions to facilitate the evaluation process.

Recommendation 1: The International Broadcasting Bureau, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi, should immediately take action to complete the mandatory position classification of the FSN-9/7 regional technical monitor position number V-006 and the FSN 8/9 technical monitor assistant position number V-005 at the Technical Monitoring Office in New Delhi. (Action: IBB, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi.)

After the inspection, BBG advised OIG that IBB and Embassy New Delhi had completed the mandatory position classifications and that the two technical monitoring positions remained at the same level.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

VOA NEWS BUREAU MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

An LES member is responsible for administrative matters and managing the VOA's South Asia bureau office - often without supervision - when the VOA correspondent is traveling to cover the news. The bureau chief told OIG that the management support provided by her information assistant and support from Washington and regional VOA offices to the bureau are, for the most part, sufficient to enable her to concentrate most of her time and energy on her news coverage responsibilities. Formally classified as an "information assistant," this employee encumbers a mixed position with substantial administrative duties. He is responsible for preparing purchase orders, overseeing procurement, managing petty cash, supervising the chauffeur, contacting the media, managing the sound studio and the local area network, negotiating for wire services, and many other functions. He has had relevant training in cashiering and other administrative functions. Inventories are up to date, properly certified, and coordinated by VOA's Central News.

The Voice of America pays the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services through Embassy New Delhi only for human resources and payroll support for its two LES. The embassy human resources office evaluated both positions in the course of the mission-wide examination of all local employee position descriptions, although the bureau has not yet received the results of the evaluation. OIG questioned the use of a personal services contract to employ the VOA driver when the lessons learned subsequent to the 1998 catastrophic embassy bombings demonstrated that local staff should not be employed on contracts. According to the embassy's human resources staff, the driver's position was not converted to a personal services agreement because the Voice of America did not ask for the change. According to the human resources office, the driver does get all relevant benefits. Nevertheless, OIG believes this situation should be remedied immediately. In addition, OIG suggests that VOA determine if its local staff in other countries have been converted from contracts to proper employment agreements. According to the IBB Manual of Operations and Administration, Part IX,

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Section 148.4, the agency has specific authority to enter into personal services contracts pursuant to 22 United States Code, Section 1471. However, IBB advised OIG that it intends to follow the Department's lead and move from personal service contracts to personal service agreements.

Recommendation 2: The Voice of America should, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi, determine if its locally employed staff are properly employed and receive all benefits to which they are entitled, and where this is not the case, take immediate steps to ensure employment status is in line with governing regulations. (Action: VOA, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi)

Subsequent to the inspection, BBG stated that it had received results of the CAJE. The direct hire was promoted from an FSN-8 to an FSN-10 and the grade of the driver remained the same. BBG added that VOA had been given the impression that all PSCs would be converted when the CAJE process was complete. This turned out not to be the case.

The bureau chief effectively supervises her staff and maintains control of bureau resources. OIG found that there was sufficient separation of duties in this small office. The information assistant manages the petty cash account, and the bureau chief reconciles the account quarterly. The bureau chief verifies time and attendance for the two LES. The bureau chief's timekeeper tracks her time and attendance from the Hong Kong VOA News Bureau. On purchase orders, the bureau chief signs as ordering officer and the information assistant as receiving officer. VOA's Bangkok Financial Liaison Office processes purchase orders and vouchers and writes checks to pay bureau expenses. The bureau chief has a procurement warrant for \$100,000. VOA Washington must approve all local purchases (other than recurring expenses) over \$500. The BBG Senior Procurement Executive approves the leases for the office and the bureau chief's residence.

BUREAU PHYSICAL SECURITY

The bureau is located in a gated apartment complex in a modern area of New Delhi approximately 15 minutes by car from the U.S. Embassy. Gate guards control access to the apartment compound. The bureau chief completed the State Department's "Security Overseas" course prior to her assignment to New Delhi.

While OIG had no reason to disagree with the bureau chief's assessment that the office has a low profile and carries out its work in a low-threat environment, OIG suggested that the bureau chief should request a "courtesy inspection" by the embassy's regional security office (RSO). OIG noted that the bureau had outdated fire extinguishers, an expired first aid kit, and no current emergency action plan. At the time of the drafting of this report, the bureau and the embassy RSO were in contact regarding the scheduling of a "courtesy inspection." As recommended by OIG, the VOA News Bureau purchased and installed new fire extinguishers and a new first aid kit.

Information technology

The New Delhi VOA News Bureau operates a small local area network (LAN) of eight workstations. A local contractor installed the LAN in early FY 2005 with approval from VOA Washington. The same local contractor provides broadband Internet access, firewall protection, antivirus support, and on-call assistance as required. According to the New Delhi bureau chief and the bureau's information assistant, there have been no significant problems since the LAN installation. The New Delhi bureau's LAN has no direct connectivity to the BBG, IBB, or to the VOA network. Also, the bureau's use of laptop computers for filing programs and reports with either the Hong Kong or London news centers and VOA headquarters are done through a dial-up connection. OIG notes that the New Delhi bureau is awaiting policy direction from headquarters as the BBG's Chief Information Officer establishes the agency's information technology management and security programs.

REGIONAL TECHNICAL MONITORING OFFICE MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The TMO occupies two small offices on the fifth floor of the American Center. The office will move onto the embassy compound when the American Center closes several years from now. Security at the office is excellent. IBB has supplied the TMO with the equipment necessary to carry out its functions at all locations in India and in the region. The equipment is bar-coded. TMO annually confirms the accuracy of the property inventory to its Washington headquarters, but there is no other inventory verification. A local computer dealer maintains the office com-

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puter equipment. The TMO does not have a petty cash imprest fund and neither employee has procurement authority. The TMO uses the Embassy New Delhi cashier to handle its cash requirements, which are minimal. The last visit by a Washington supervisor was several years ago.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Regional Technical Monitoring Office

Recommendation 1: The International Broadcasting Bureau, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi, should immediately take action to complete the mandatory position classification of the FSN-9/7 regional technical monitor position number V-006 and the FSN 8/9 technical monitor assistant position number V-005 at the Technical Monitoring Office in New Delhi. (Action: IBB, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi.)

VOA News Bureau

Recommendation 2: The Voice of America should, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi, determine if its locally employed staff are properly employed and receive all benefits to which they are entitled, and where this is not the case, take immediate steps to ensure employment status is in line with governing regulations. (Action: VOA, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi)

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Informal recommendations cover operational matters not requiring action by organizations outside the inspected unit and/or the parent regional bureau. Informal recommendations will not be subject to the OIG compliance process. However, any subsequent OIG inspection or on-site compliance review will assess the mission's progress in implementing the informal recommendations.

VOA News Bureau

The bureau chief produces a monthly video news program on her own personal computer and uses her personal software.

Informal Recommendation 1: The Voice of America should provide the correspondent bureau in New Delhi with broadcast quality video production and editing hardware and software. (Action: VOA)

After the inspection, BBG told OIG that VOA News had supplied the New Delhi correspondent with a video editing laptop and software. In addition, it provided a new computer that will work for both radio and television.

Regional Technical Monitoring Office

There is no independent verification of the property inventory at the technical monitoring office. The technical monitoring office does not subscribe to inventory service under ICASS.

Informal Recommendation 2: The International Broadcasting Bureau should arrange for an embassy employee, a temporary duty International Broadcasting Bureau employee, or a Voice of America employee to verify the property inventory at the technical monitoring office. (Action: IBB)

After the inspection, IBB directed TMO to ask Embassy New Delhi's General Services Office for assistance in performing an independent verification of the New Delhi TMO inventory, stating that an independent verification of the inventory located outside New Delhi was impractical.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
VOA South Asia Bureau Chief	Mary Patricia Nunan	Oct. 18, 2003
Technical Monitoring Office	Anurag Parashar Senior Monitor	Sept. 14, 1997

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ABBREVIATIONS

BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
FSN	Foreign Service national
IBB	International Broadcasting Bureau
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
LAN	Local Area Network
LES	Locally Employed Staff
OIG	Office of Inspector General
RSO	Regional Security Officer
TMO	Technical Monitoring Office
VOA	Voice of America

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