



From: Broadcasting Board of Governors
Date: June 19, 2013
Subject: **Minutes of the BBG Meeting of June 19, 2013¹**

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) met today at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) offices in Washington, D.C. and Prague, Czech Republic. As a quorum was not present, the Governors were not able to make any decisions at the meeting. The meeting was open for public observation via streaming on the BBG website. (While members of the public were permitted to attend this meeting in person, no one attended.)

The meeting was attended by the following Board members in Washington:

Governor Susan McCue
Governor Michael Meehan
Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Tara Sonenshine

Governor Victor Ashe participated via videoconference from Prague.

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

The meeting agenda is set forth in Attachment 1.

Governor McCue announced that Governor Meehan was running late and had asked her to preside at the meeting. Governor Ashe commented that this is the first time that a woman has chaired a meeting of the BBG.

Governor McCue stated that the meeting was being recorded, and that the live broadcast was available by webcast on the BBG website. She noted that a quorum of the Board was not present, and that there was neither a Presiding Governor nor an Alternate Presiding Governor. The Governors agreed that Governor McCue should act as chair *pro tem*.

Governor McCue gave brief remarks thanking and honoring Governor Lynton for his service on the Board. She announced that Under Secretary Sonenshine will depart in July 2013, and that this was her last meeting as a member of the BBG Board. On behalf of the Board, Governor McCue thanked the Under Secretary for her service on the Board and expressed hope that she will remain in touch with this Board and engage in U.S. international media matters in the years to come. Governor Ashe also expressed his appreciation of the Under Secretary and urged the attendance of the Secretary of State at a future BBG meeting.

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

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Governor Ashe summarized his visit at RFE/RL headquarters in Prague. He noted a sea-change in morale and attitude of employees, including enthusiasm in the building for the mission of RFE/RL. Governor McCue commented that she and Governor Meehan had visited RFE/RL's Moscow office in early May and would be happy to talk with Governor Ashe before his trip to Moscow the next day.

At about 8:30 a.m., Governor Meehan joined the meeting.

Governor McCue commended the BBG journalists for their extensive coverage—with objective up-to-the-minute reports and analysis—of the presidential elections in Iran and the protests in Turkey calling for the right to freedom of speech and right to assembly, among other issues.

Governor McCue highlighted recent harassment and threats of BBG journalists and other impediments from those who seek to restrict the free flow of information. Governor McCue noted that it has been 10 months since Alhurra correspondent Bashar Fahmi went missing in Syria. On behalf of the Board, Governor McCue demanded Mr. Fahmi's immediate release, as well as other journalists being held in Syria, including Austin Tice and James Foley, and asked for anybody with information about Mr. Fahmi's whereabouts or well-being to step forward. In addition, Governor McCue reported that, leading up to the presidential elections, Iranian authorities had made numerous attempts to get Radio Farda and Voice of America (VOA) journalists to cease reporting by threatening their families and loved ones. Furthermore, messages sent to VOA through Facebook indicate that satellite signals experienced interference in Tehran and other cities during the coverage, depriving citizens of news and information.

Governor McCue reported other threats to freedom of the press across the regions: (1) In Iraq, several journalists, including Alhurra-Iraq anchors, have been threatened in recent weeks; (2) In Azerbaijan, efforts by RFE/RL Azerbaijani Service to expand its regional reporting met with official resistance in May, as reporters in several regions were attacked while covering stories such as correspondent Elchin Ismayilli who was physically assaulted by an assistant local governor in the Ismaili district while reporting on flooding in the region, and RFE/RL regional correspondent Turla Mustafayev who was summoned to the police department and threatened three days after reporting about an incident that took place between police officers and a driver and his relatives. In addition, the Service's regional correspondent in Imishli, was detained by police while covering a protest of farmers and was charged the next day with "disobeying police orders" and fined approximately \$180, and RFE/RL's Azerbaijani-language television news program on Turksat was suspended after experiencing interference that appears to be targeted and deliberate; (3) In Turkmenistan, RFE/RL Turkmen Service correspondent Rovshen Yazmuhamedov was detained without charge and held incommunicado for two weeks by Turkmen authorities and was later released following statements and appeals on Yazmuhamedov's behalf by the European Union, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders; (4) In Belarus, RFE/RL Belarus Service correspondent Aleh Hruzdilovich was officially warned by Belarusian authorities about violating Belarus' law on mass media because he posted an article that exposed security deficiencies at Minsk subway stations, and that any subsequent warning could result in Hruzdilovich being stripped of his official accreditation; (5) In Turkey, RFE/RL Azerbaijani Service correspondent Yafez Hasanov,

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who has been subject to threats since reporting on a suspicious death in a facility run by the National Security Ministry in 2011, was threatened while in Istanbul by five thugs who broke into the apartment where he was staying; and (6) In Pakistan, Adnan Khan Bitani, a stringer for VOA's Deewa Radio who regularly provides balanced coverage of attacks that take place in North/South Waziristan, has been threatened with text messages from a man who identifies himself as Ihsan Ullah Ihsan, the name of the spokesman for the Taliban. On behalf of the Board, Governor McCue urged officials and local authorities to ensure the safety of all journalists and punish those that misuse authority, threaten or harm reporters.

In conclusion, Governor McCue announced that the next regular Board meeting will be held at the Cohen Building in Washington, D.C. on August 14 and 15, 2013.

Other Attendees:

The following persons were also present during all or part of the meeting: International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) Director Richard Lobo, IBB Deputy Director Jeffrey Trimble, Deputy General Counsel and Board Secretary Paul Kollmer-Dorsey, Director of Communications & External Affairs Lynne Weil, Director of Board Operations Oanh Tran, Director of Strategy and Development Bruce Sherman, Board Operations and Policy Adviser Ashley Lancaster, and Director for the Office of Technology, Services and Innovation Andre Mendes; David Ensor, Director of the Voice of America; Carlos Garcia-Perez, Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting via teleconference; Kevin Klose, Acting President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty via video conference; Libby Liu, President of Radio Free Asia; Brian Conniff, President of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks; and Dan Sreebny, Senior Advisor for BBG, Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs.

Witnessed:

Paul Kollmer-Dorsey
Secretary

Attachment:

1. Agenda for June 19, 2013 Meeting

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ATTACHMENT 1

BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS June 2013 Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, June 19

8:00 **Broadcasting Board of Governors' Open Meeting**

I. Open Session

Chairman Pro Tem Remarks