



From: Broadcasting Board of Governors
Date: August 30, 2017
Subject: **Minutes of the BBG Meeting of August 30, 2017**

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) met today in the Cohen Building (BBG headquarters) in Washington, D.C. The meeting was open for public attendance as seating capacity allowed and for public observation via streaming on the BBG website.

The meeting was attended by the following Board members:

Chairman Kenneth Weinstein
Governor Ryan Crocker
Governor Michael Kempner
Governor Jeffrey Shell
Acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Bruce Wharton

Governor Leon Aron and Governor Karen Kornbluh were not in attendance. Other persons in attendance are listed at the end of these minutes.

The agenda of the meeting is set forth in Attachment 1.

Chairman Weinstein called the meeting to order and noted that the meeting was being held in compliance with the Government in the Sunshine Act and streamed live over the Internet at the BBG website.

The Chairman announced the retirement of Acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Bruce Wharton at the end of September. He said that this will be a big loss for both the U.S. Department of State and BBG, and that Ambassador Wharton is a true patriot and a wonderful colleague. He added that, in recent years, the Board had benefited by its strong partnership with the State Department, and particularly the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. He noted that, from the time of his appointment on the Board, Ambassador Wharton has shown a keen understanding of the importance of the BBG's work and its challenges, and has been enormously helpful to the success of the BBG. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman thanked Ambassador Wharton for his service and invited him to give brief remarks. Ambassador Wharton expressed his appreciation for serving on the Board for a brief period and his strong belief in the BBG's mission. He stated that the BBG's mission remains vital due to its credibility and independence, and it serves as a model for freedom of expression and free media. On a final note, the Ambassador added that he will find ways to continue to support the BBG.

The Chairman outlined the ongoing threats to the press around the world. He noted that, since the last Board meeting, some of BBG's journalists had been harassed, beaten, and intimidated.

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He highlighted following incidents: 1) In China, on August 16, Radio Free Asia (RFA) journalist Palden Gyal and his family planned to visit relatives during a stopover in Guangzhou on their way back to the U.S. from a family vacation, but airport customs and security detained Mr. Gyal and forced him to turn over his cell phone and instructed him to leave China that evening, which prevented him from seeing his China-based family, including his 80-year-old mother; 2) Also in China, on August 14, Voice of America (VOA) Mandarin Service's Beijing Correspondent Yibing Feng and his news assistant Ai Lun were questioned by what appeared to be Chinese plainclothes investigators and later taken to a police station where they were held and interrogated for more than four hours; 3) In Dar Es Salaam, on August 17, Khalid Abubakar, a VOA Swahili stringer who identified himself as a VOA journalist to the police, was arrested and beaten by police while trying to cover a story of a traffic standoff between police and drivers in downtown Dar Es Salaam; 4) In Nairobi, on August 10, VOA Nairobi correspondent Jill Craig and Nairobi Bureau TV Producer Amos Wangwa were threatened by plain clothed police while reporting on the announcement of election results and were held for several hours; 5) In Crimea, on August 3, the presiding judge for Crimean journalist and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) Contributor Mykola Semena again delayed the trial – pushing it back to August 31 – for the article Mr. Semena wrote criticizing Moscow's seizure of the Black Sea Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014; 6) In Vietnam, RFA contributor and blogger Nguyễn Ngọc Già was serving a four-year prison term with another three years of probation for the nebulous charge of “propaganda against the state”; 7) Also in Vietnam, RFA videographer Nguyen Van Hoá was being held in violation of Vietnam's penal code for “abusing democratic freedoms to infringe on the interests of the state,” which carries a maximum sentence of seven years in prison; and 8) In Turkmenistan, RFE/RL photographer and contributor Saparmamed Nepeskuliev remains detained by Turkmenistan's National Security Ministry, where he has been incommunicado for more than two years.

In closing, Chairman Weinstein mentioned two journalists who had gone missing: 1) Stanislav Aseyev, blogger and contributor to RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, went missing since June 2, 2017, when he was forcibly disappeared by Russia-backed separatists in Ukraine's war-torn Eastern Donetsk region; and 2) Middle East Broadcasting Networks' (MBN) Alhurra TV correspondent Bashar Fahmi went missing in Syria five years ago after an August 2012 firefight in Aleppo.

Turning to Board business, the Chairman stated that the presence of five or more Governors satisfies the Board's quorum requirement, permitting the Board to conduct business based on majority vote. He said that the Board had received by email materials for the consent agenda on August 17. He added that he did not receive comments from any Governors.

The Chairman noted that the only item on the consent agenda for the Board's consideration was the draft minutes of the June 14, 2017 meeting of the plenary Board. Governor Kempner moved for adoption of the consent agenda. Ambassador Wharton seconded. Without objection, the consent agenda was unanimously adopted by the Board.

In accordance with the Board's prior protocol for allowing members of the public to speak at meetings, the Chairman invited the following members of the public to address the Board for

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three minutes: Ann Noonan, Committee for U.S. International Broadcasting; Yan Zhao of Zhaoyan Broadcasting and his translator Xiu Qun of Zhaoyan Broadcasting; and Adam Powell, University of Southern California.

Chairman Weinstein asked CEO Lansing to report on agency operations since the last Board meeting. Mr. Lansing began with an announcement on the departure of his Chief of Staff, Rob Fallon, who will be leaving the Agency in September to join the Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands as its Director of External Relations. There followed brief remarks by Mr. Fallon.

CEO Lansing stated that the BBG networks advance U.S. national interest by providing audiences in closed societies, or where free media is not yet fully established, with consistently accurate, compelling, and professional journalism. He noted that, in this rapidly evolving global media environment, the work of U.S. international media is so critical. He then invited the U.S. International Coordinating Committee (ICC) to highlight their progress in several key strategic areas of the BBG. RFE/RL President Tom Kent depicted RFE/RL's reporting in Central Asia and the importance of such reporting to its mission. Office of Cuba Broadcasting Director Malule Gonzalez previewed the upcoming Cuba Internet Freedom Conference in Miami from November 7 to November 8. RFA Managing Director for East Asia Min Mitchell gave a progress report on the DPRK project. MBN President Alberto Fernandez, who joined the BBG as MBN's new President on July 17, spoke about his strategy for MBN and some of his new initiatives. VOA Director Amanda Bennett noted an increased focus by VOA to tell America's story and described *My American Story*, a 26 episode documentary series featuring a wide variety of Russian speakers who came to the U.S. to start a new life. In closing, CEO Lansing invited his Executive Assistant Yoruba Mitchell to give an update on the partnership between Peace Corps and VOA by which teaching materials and lesson plans designed by VOA Learning English staff are provided to Peace Corps volunteers in order for them to conduct English training in remote areas around the world.

Chairman Weinstein stated that the next Board meeting is scheduled to be held at BBG headquarters in Washington, D.C., on November 15, 2017. He said that the Governors were encouraged to give input regarding other topics that they may like to see addressed at the next meeting.

The Broadcasting Board of Governors agreed to the following decision elements (all decisions were adopted by a unanimous vote unless otherwise indicated):

1. Adoption of Minutes of June 14, 2017 Board Meeting. The Board adopted the minutes of the June 14, 2017 meeting of the plenary Board as set forth in Attachment 2.

Other Attendees:

The following persons were also present during all or part of the meeting: BBG CEO and Director John Lansing; Chief of Staff Rob Fallon; General Counsel and Board Secretary David Kligerman; Managing Director Oanh Tran; Director of Global Communications and Office of Public Affairs Nasserie Carew; Director of the Office of Internet Freedom Nnake Nweke; BBG

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Deputy Director Jeffrey Trimble; Deputy Director of Technology, Services, and Innovation Terry Balazs; Chief Financial Officer Grant Turner; Congressional Liaison Marta McLellan Ross; Public Affairs Specialist Chelsea Milko; Contractor for BBG Public Affairs Gigi Frias; Writer-Editor (Multimedia) Laurie Moy; Executive Assistant Yoruba Mitchell; Senior Advisor to the BBG Jeffrey Shapiro; Associate Director for Program Support Gary Thatcher; Amanda Bennett, VOA Director; Sandy Sugawara, VOA Deputy Director; Kelu Chao, VOA Program Director; Maria “Malule” Gonzalez, OCB Director; Thomas Kent, RFE/RL President; Ben Herman, RFE/RL General Counsel; Pamela Goodnow, RFE/RL Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer; Min Mitchell, RFA Managing Director for East Asia; Bernadette Burns, RFA General Counsel; Alberto Fernandez, MBN President; Anne Noble, MBN General Counsel; Deirdre Kline, MBN Director of Communications; and Stephanie Forman Morimura, Special Assistant, Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs.

Kenneth Weinstein
Chairman

Witnessed:

David Kligerman
Board Secretary

Attachments:

1. Agenda for August 30, 2017 Board Meeting
2. Minutes of June 14, 2017 Board Meeting

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ATTACHMENT 1

BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS

August 2017 Meeting Agenda

(ALL MEETINGS ARE AT COHEN BUILDING, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.)

Wednesday, August 30

2:15 – 3:15 Broadcasting Board of Governors’ Open Meeting

- A. Chairman Remarks
- B. Consent Agenda
 - Draft Minutes of June 14, 2017 Meeting
- C. Public Comment
- D. CEO & Director’s Report
- E. Other Items for Consideration at Next Board Meeting

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ATTACHMENT 2

From: Broadcasting Board of Governors
Date: June 14, 2017
Subject: **Minutes of the BBG Meeting of June 14, 2017**

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) met today in the Cohen Building (BBG headquarters) in Washington, D.C. The meeting was open for public attendance as seating capacity allowed and for public observation via streaming on the BBG website.

The meeting was attended by the following Board members:

Chairman Kenneth Weinstein
Governor Leon Aron
Governor Ryan Crocker
Governor Michael Kempner (via telephone)
Governor Karen Kornbluh

Governor Jeffrey Shell and Acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Bruce Wharton were not in attendance. Other persons in attendance are listed at the end of these minutes.

The agenda of the meeting is set forth in Attachment 1.

Chairman Weinstein called the meeting to order and noted that the meeting was being held in compliance with the Government in the Sunshine Act and streamed live over the Internet at the BBG website.

The Chairman began with a sad announcement concerning Congressman Steve Scalise and others who were injured after a gunman opened fire at a congressional baseball practice. On behalf of the Board, he expressed condolences to the victims and asked for a moment of silence.

Chairman Weinstein recognized the strength of the BBG team and commended the team's success as he announced the departure of Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN) President Brian Conniff. He complimented on the growth of MBN under Mr. Conniff's leadership in the past 11 years, noting MBN as a modern, impactful organization that responds effectively to the region's evolving media environment. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman thanked Mr. Conniff for his service, leadership and friendship, and presented Mr. Conniff with a Certificate of Appreciation. The Chairman then announced the appointment of Ambassador Alberto Fernandez as the new President of MBN, highlighting the Ambassador's recent position with the Middle East Media Research Institute and various roles at the U.S. Department of State. He added that the Ambassador is widely regarded as one of the most knowledgeable and impactful U.S. voices in

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the Arabic-language media, and is also a fluent Arabic speaker. At the Chairman's invitation, Ambassador Fernandez gave brief remarks and expressed his enthusiasm working with the Board, BBG Chief Executive Officer (CEO) John Lansing, and BBG team in mid-July. There followed remarks by Mr. Conniff, including his long career in U.S. international media (USIM) and his strong belief in fulfilling the needs of USIM's global audiences.

The Chairman segued to the ongoing threats to the press around the world. He noted the following incidents: 1) In Cambodia, Prime Minister Hun Sen called journalists "foreign servants," and a member of the Cambodian National Assembly accused Voice of America (VOA) and other media of seeking to destroy the reputation of the country's leadership; 2) In Russia, lawmakers accused the Russian-language services of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and VOA, including CNN, of "engaging in propaganda and sowing confusion in the Russian electoral process" during the September 2016 parliamentary elections, and that Russian officials continue to block RFE/RL freelancers from official events, using lack of accreditation as an excuse, including Alexy Navalny who was covering a protest in support of opposition activist but was pulled out of the area and threatened; and 3) In Azerbaijan, a district court ruling in Baku, provided legal justification for the Azerbaijani government's censorship of RFE/RL Azerbaijani Service's website that began on March 27.

The Chairman also noted some examples of BBG journalists falling under threat, or open attack: 1) In Venezuela, VOA Spanish Service reporter Alvaro Algarra has been the victim of harassment and intimidation over the past several months while covering protests in Caracas, and most recently, while recording a protest in the center of Caracas, a platoon of national guard officers stopped Mr. Algarra, took his bag and money, and ordered him to stop reporting; 2) In Angola, reporters for VOA Portuguese to Africa Service, including producer Siona Junior and others who were preparing special election programming in Angola, had been harassed and threatened by government officials since April; 3) In Armenia, RFE/RL Armenian Service reporter Sisak Gabrielian was attacked a second time in six weeks, while reporting on allegations of vote buying by the ruling party during that day's municipal elections; 4) In China, Ai Lun, a Beijing-based news assistant for VOA Mandarin Service has been intimidated and harassed by Chinese security personnel in several times throughout the year, and most recently, the authorities interrogated Ai Lun on his background, VOA personnel, and coverage.

In closing, Chairman Weinstein called for immediate release of three of BBG journalists that remain imprisoned: RFE/RL's Mykola Semena in Crimea; RFE/RL's Saparmamed Nepeskuliev in Turkmenistan; RFE/RL's Stanislav Aseyev in Ukraine; and Radio Free Asia's Nguyễn Văn Hoá in Vietnam. He also called the harassment for all journalists to come to a stop.

Turning to Board business, the Chairman stated that the presence of five or more Governors satisfies the Board's quorum requirement, permitting the Board to conduct business based on majority vote. He said that the Board had received by email materials for the consent agenda on June 1. He added that he did not receive comments from any Governors.

The Chairman described the six items on the consent agenda for the Board's consideration: draft minutes of the April 6, 2017 meeting of the plenary Board; a resolution honoring VOA Swahili

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Service's 55th anniversary; a resolution honoring VOA Azerbaijani Service's 35th anniversary; a resolution honoring VOA Kurdish Service's 25th anniversary; and a resolution honoring RFE/RL North Caucasus Service 15th anniversary. Governor Crocker moved for adoption of the consent agenda. Governor Kornbluh seconded. Without objection, the consent agenda was unanimously adopted by the Board.

In accordance with the Board's prior protocol for allowing members of the public to speak at meetings, the Chairman invited Sasha Gong and Huchen Zhang of VOA Mandarin Service each to address the Board for three minutes.

Chairman Weinstein asked CEO Lansing to report on agency operations since the last Board meeting. Mr. Lansing announced the appointment of Jeffrey Trimble as Deputy Director of the BBG. He reported that the Agency's human resource department had retained an independent, reputable law firm to conduct an investigation aimed at determining the facts around VOA Mandarin's interview of Guo Wengui in May. He said that since the investigation was ongoing, the BBG will not comment further, and that all should reserve judgment on all fronts until the investigation is concluded. He stated that Matt Ciepielowski is leading an effort to address the President's Executive Order on a comprehensive plan for reorganizing the Executive Branch and had begun soliciting internal and external input for the Agency's reform plan. He informed the Board that, at the request of VOA Director Amanda Bennett and RFE/RL President Tom Kent, the Agency had commissioned an external, independent content review of VOA's Persian News Network and RFE/RL's Radio Farda to ensure that their Iran coverage remains completely objective and fact-based.

CEO Lansing gave an update on the strategic cooperation of the U.S. International Coordinating Committee (ICC) of the BBG. VOA Director Amanda Bennett announced the opening of a new Silicon Valley bureau in San Francisco, and described and played a video clip from *Off the Highway* series as part of VOA's intensified focus on telling America's story. RFE/RL President Tom Kent depicted the impact of RFE/RL's investigative reporting by presenting video clips of recent stories on child abuse, rural poverty and human trafficking. RFA President Libby Liu highlighted the collaboration of RFA and VOA during the recent Cambodian elections. Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) Director Malule Gonzalez presented a video clip and described the success of a recent documentary about the Cuban pilots who flew planes during the Bay of Pigs invasion. MBN President Brian Conniff noted and showed a video clip of a new Alhurra program called "Exiting ISIS," a thirteen episode series of interviews with ISIS defectors.

In conclusion, CEO Lansing stated that the BBG's participation in this year's Nathanson Public Diplomacy Scholarship program had been renewed for a second year, and announced this year's winners, including Vivian Chakarian of VOA, Oscar Rodriguez of OCB, Maryana Drach of RFE/RL, Rohit Mahajan of RFA, Omar Mahmood of MBN, and Kate Neeper of the International Broadcasting Bureau.

Chairman Weinstein stated that the next Board meeting is scheduled to be held at BBG headquarters in Washington, D.C., on August 30, 2017. He said that the Governors were encouraged to give input regarding other topics that they may like to see addressed at the next meeting.

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The Broadcasting Board of Governors agreed to the following decision elements (all decisions were adopted by a unanimous vote unless otherwise indicated):

1. Adoption of Minutes of April 6, 2017 Board Meeting. The Board adopted the minutes of the April 6, 2017 meeting of the plenary Board as set forth in Attachment 2.
2. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Swahili Service 55th Anniversary. The Board adopted the resolution honoring Voice of America's Swahili Service 55th anniversary as set forth in Attachment 3.
3. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Azerbaijani Service 35th Anniversary. The Board adopted the resolution honoring Voice of America's Azerbaijani Service 35th anniversary as set forth in Attachment 4.
4. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Kurdish Service 25th Anniversary. The Board adopted the resolution honoring Voice of America's Kurdish Service 25th anniversary as set forth in Attachment 5.
5. Resolution Honoring Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's North Caucasus Service 15th Anniversary. The Board adopted the resolution honoring Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's North Caucasus Service 15th anniversary as set forth in Attachment 6.

Other Attendees:

The following persons were also present during all or part of the meeting: BBG CEO and Director John Lansing; Chief of Staff Rob Fallon; General Counsel and Board Secretary David Kligerman; Director of Board Operations Oanh Tran; Director of Congressional Affairs Ellona Fritschie; Director of Global Communications and Office of Public Affairs Nasserie Carew; Director of the Office of Internet Freedom Nnake Nweke; BBG Deputy Director Jeffrey Trimble; Director of Technology, Services, and Innovation Andre Mendes; Public Affairs Specialist Chelsea Milko; Director of Research Sonja Gloeckle; Supervisory Program Analyst Mollie King; Program Analyst Kate Neepser; Management and Program Analyst Theresa Beatty; Budget Director Frank Filipkowski; Writer-Editor (Multimedia) Laurie Moy; Public Affairs/Internal Communications Adeyemi Jimason; White House Liaison to the BBG Matt Ciepielowski; Communications Advisor to the BBG Matt Schuck; Amanda Bennett, VOA Director; Sandy Sugawara, VOA Deputy Director; Kelu Chao, VOA Program Director; Bridget Serchak, VOA Director of Public Relations; Maria "Malule" Gonzalez, OCB Director; Thomas Kent, RFE/RL President; Ben Herman, RFE/RL General Counsel; Pamela Goodnow, RFE/RL Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer; Stephanie Schmidt, RFE/RL Budget Director; Libby Liu, RFA President; Bernadette Burns, RFA General Counsel; Brian Conniff, MBN President; Nicholas Snyder, Senior Assistant, Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs; and Ilan Berman, Senior Vice President of the American Foreign Policy Council.

Kenneth Weinstein
Chairman

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Witnessed:

David Kligerman
Board Secretary

Attachments:

1. Agenda for June 14, 2017 Board Meeting
2. Minutes of April 6, 2017 Board Meeting
3. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Swahili Service 55th Anniversary
4. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Azerbaijani Service 35th Anniversary
5. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Kurdish Service 25th Anniversary
6. Resolution Honoring Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's North Caucasus Service 15th Anniversary