

Document Background The document used in this lesson can be found in the Governor's Papers Collection, Record Group 1302.7, Box 087906, 1960, Folder C – Civil Defense Box #2. The Governor's Papers Collection consists of general administrative files created by the Office of the Governor reflecting the operations of that office. This collection dates from 1874 to 2001. James Caleb Boggs served as Governor of Delaware from 1953 to 1960.

Background Information Writing in *USA TODAY* in remembrance of Willis Conover, the man who personified America to millions of Europeans through his Voice of America broadcasts, Samuel G. Freedman, professor of journalism at Columbia University, wrote

In the aftermath of Sept. 11's atrocities, Americans have fumed and fulminated about how Osama bin Laden's terrorists attacked the USA because they hated its freedom, democracy and diversity. The more disturbing realization might be that we have projected those values not too much, but far too little, into the parochial and aggrieved Muslim world. By our lassitude, we have allowed ourselves to be cast as infidels.ⁱ

Recognizing the power of this under publicized and, now, under funded tool of American diplomacy is necessary in today's world. After World War II the United States operated three "radios" throughout the world: the Voice of America, tasked with presenting news about America in foreign countries, and Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, tasked with broadcasting local country news that may be blocked by governmental interference within the designated country. Today, this number has swelled to six major radios, and related subsets, as well as television and Internet broadcasting operations. All focus on the same grand goal as the first three U.S. radios, spreading the ideals of democracy and information throughout the world.

In the first part of the 20th century, it was obvious that the United States did not fully appreciate the power of radio as a means of rallying world support for American ideas and ideals. By the end of 1930, the Soviet Union was broadcasting its ideas and messages via short-wave radio in 50 languages to countries around the globe.

International exposure using this technology was in place in Italy, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, and Germany. Robert Sherwood, one of President Roosevelt's speechwriters and first head of the Foreign Information Service under the Office of War Information, had been preaching the power of radio as a means of thought communication but gained little Congressional support for establishment of a US government sponsored station. World War II brought about the realization that America needed to use this forum for spreading ideas about democracy. Within 79 days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States had already begun broadcasting to Asia from a station in San Francisco and to Europe from a station headed by John Houseman in New York City. The opening words of the initial broadcast by William Harlan Hale, "Here speaks a voice from America," became the signature onset of American broadcasts to other countries and became the name, the Voice of America, for the transmission stations.ⁱⁱ

After World War II concluded, debate raged over the future of the VOA; many members of Congress believed that VOA was being used to present President Roosevelt's aims and platforms to the world. However, with the Berlin Blockade and the escalation of the Cold War, the incursion of Soviet propaganda into all areas of the globe, support for the embattled Voice of America gained strength and, with the passage of the Smith-Mundt Act, Congress formally established an international radio transmissions and cultural exchange program. The debate over the vision continued, however, dominated by two schools of thought: Was VOA's role "to report the news and reflect America, or was it to be used as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy and as a "weapon" against the Soviet Union?"ⁱⁱⁱ Rapidly mounting global events and conflicts moved the mission to that of being an instrument of foreign policy, presenting the news as truthfully as possible to countries around the world and in native languages. During this time the Voice of America operated under the auspices of the Department of State, speaking to the world, including Communist nations, about American society and American values. VOA walked, and still walks, a high tightrope, balancing its role as an agency of the government with its mission to demonstrate truth in broadcasting. Codified in 1994, the obligations of the VOA state that:

The long-range interests of the United States are served by communicating directly with the peoples of the world by radio. To be effective, the Voice of America must win the attention and respect of listeners. These principles will therefore govern Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts.

1. VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive. 2. VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions. 3. VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies.^{iv} Thousands of displaced persons lived in Europe in the years after the war, searching for work and homes and refusing to return to homelands often controlled by Communists. The United States, under the guidance of State Department official George F. Kennan, organized the National Committee for a Free Europe and worked to find jobs and productive roles for the émigrés as well as involving them in the re-democratizing process of Communist controlled countries. Recognizing that these people were often the leaders and the intelligentsia of their native countries, the group resolved to create a vehicle that would facilitate the insertion of anti-communist messages in native languages in both print and spoken words. In 1950 Radio Free Europe was established as the broadcast component of the plan while Free Europe Press handled written material.

Initially presented to the world community as being funded by public donations from the fund raising efforts of groups such as the Crusade for Freedom, RFE appeared to have much greater latitude in its broadcasts. Following is the text of a telegram sent to President Truman on May 1, 1950 signed by Joseph C. Grew, former Ambassador to Japan and Acting Secretary of State and General Lucius D. Clay, overseer of the Berlin Airlift operation.

In your speech of April 20 you urged private initiative in expressing the voice of freedom. The National Committee for a Free Europe was organized for this purpose, and particularly to help those who love freedom and, as a result, have been exiled to continue to fight for the

restoration of freedom in their countries. We believe that the American people are ready for a crusade for freedom which will not only support the voices of those from behind the Iron Curtain who have lost freedom and home but will augment their voices with an overwhelming expression from free people in this country and everywhere of their faith and confidence that there will yet be a free world. We recognize the additional responsibility which has been thrust upon us by your challenging words, and we want to assure you that we are proceeding immediately with every resource at our disposal to organize in this country a crusade for freedom which will be a genuine expression of the will of the American people and which, through Radio Free Europe and other facilities, will be carried throughout the world. We have every confidence that the American people will join enthusiastically in this crusade to preserve their heritage, and thus respond fully and promptly to your expression of faith.^v

RFE's focus was to capture the essence of freedom described in the Grew-Clay telegram and broadcast it to the five Soviet Union countries in six different languages. The broadcasts often included news not otherwise available because of censorship restrictions imposed by the central government. Pamphlets about democracy were dropped in balloons over Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary. In 1953, seeing the need to extend its reach to other Eastern European countries, the NCFE established Radio Liberty. Both radios were to avoid overt propaganda and agitation. While the VOA gathered information from the State Department or other government agencies and was perceived to be a news outlet as well as an arm of the Federal Government, RFE and RL, supposedly funded by public donations, appeared free of governmental influence and often broadcast information garnered from undisclosed sources.

Controversies of one kind or another have beset all three "radios" during their histories. In the 1950's Senator Joseph McCarthy launched his vicious attacks on many people and government agencies, declaring that the country was inundated by the presence of Communists within the top levels of government and the social institutions overseeing the United States. The Voice of America was seen as a hotbed of potential Communist penetration. Not only was it under the Department of State, but McCarthy also

questioned everything about the agency from the infiltration of Communists into its broadcast staff (many resigned) to the placement of its radio towers in Europe. Financing scandals rocked RFE and RL when, in the summer of 1971, Senator Clifford P. Case, Republican from New Jersey, “revealed that the Central Intelligence Agency spent several hundred million dollars over the last 20 years to keep them functioning.”^{vi} Prior to this revelation, while long suspected as being funded by the CIA, RFE and RL presented outward propaganda that they operated under privately owned and controlled corporations and were funded through charitable donations. The CIA funded the agencies through the National Security Council and bypassed the need for congressional approval for the funding. A June 25, 1971 Senate Resolution gave the two radios an estimated 30 million dollars for the next fiscal year. “The Senate resolution, marking the first time in their 20-year histories that the two stations have been openly financed by the United States Government, attracted little attention in United States newspapers. It was given prominent coverage in the Soviet press, however.”^{vii}

Irate at the blatant disregard for the legislative process and the avoidance of funding protocols by RFE and RL, Senator J. William Fulbright in 1972 questioned the need for the stations, believing them to be deterrents to the détente process. Concerned with skyrocketing costs, the number of stations, and the apparent duplication of efforts of the three radios, he also stressed the need for European allies to begin to assume some of the financial responsibilities for the maintenance and operations of the stations.^{viii} Criticisms were also launched against RFE and RL during the Hungarian Revolt for the stations had suggested to the people that foreign help was on the way, if only they could hold out for a bit longer. There was no aid forthcoming, 10,000 to 20,000 people lost their lives in the Revolt. Accusations were made that RFE’s all out propaganda and commentaries incited the revolution. The United Nations, the West German Government, a United States Senate subcommittee, and the Council of Europe conducted investigations, and even though RFE was cleared of wrongdoing, its reputation was damaged when it was cited for broadcasting news that implied that Western aid would be arriving. West Germany faulted RFE for the tone of its broadcasts, the irresponsible statements made on the air, and errors in judgment.^{ix}

Throughout the next two decades organizational changes consolidated the two radios into the RFE/RL, Inc. and placed them and the Voice of America under a Congressionally created board, the Board for International Broadcasting. This Board received monetary appropriations and made sure that the broadcasts were consistent with the broad spectrum of US foreign policy. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many believed the radios had outlived their usefulness and funding should be terminated. However, a campaign launched by people from the countries long receiving news from the radios and from the Voice of America pleaded for continuation.^x In 1994 President Clinton signed the International Broadcasting Act which consolidated all foreign broadcasting groups under one umbrella, overseen by a bi-partisan, nine member Broadcasting Board of Governors, eight of whom are appointed by the President and approved by the Senate. The ninth member is ex officio, the Secretary of State. This Board supervises operations of the IBB as well as oversees distribution of grant appropriations to RFE/RL and Radio Free Asia. President Clinton, through the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act, signed into law on October 21, 1998, designated the Broadcasting Board of Governors as an independent Federal Agency.^{xi} The consolidation within this new agency of “all independent, autonomous entity responsible for all U.S. government and government sponsored, non-military, international broadcasting” strengthened the entire spectrum of broadcasting entities. The mission of this new agency is “To promote and sustain freedom and democracy by broadcasting accurate and objective news and information about the United States and the world to audiences overseas.” It reaches 125 countries and broadcasts in 65 different languages.^{xii} Reviewing the Strategic Goals for the group shows the strong emphasis now placed on incorporating new technologies to their maximum potential and defining and reaching markets in the critical areas in the Middle East. The second Goal states that the agency will “Expand the U.S. International Broadcasting System through Regional Networks and Single-Country Priority Initiatives” and accomplish this goal by:

- Launch[ing] the Middle East Radio Network and Make It a Success
- Harmoniz[ing] Radio Free Afghanistan and VOA in the Afghanistan Radio Network

- Pioneer[ing] Anti-terrorism Broadcasting and

- Reach[ing] the Two Continental Giants: Russia and China^{xiii} President George W. Bush's budget proposal for FY 2003 and FY 2004 shows major cuts in the capital improvements arena but increased funding proposed for the broadcast divisions. President Bush wants high monetary expenditures and efforts devoted to Middle East television broadcasts in native languages throughout the region. Funding is doubled for Indonesia and substantially increased for broadcasting capabilities to the Near East and Far East. There is to be a reduction in broadcast money committed to Central and Eastern European countries as well as a five percent reduction in administration and managerial expenses.^{xiv} Even with all of the advances in technology and programming, the changes, and the problems throughout America's involvement in international radio broadcasting, the words of President John F. Kennedy spoken on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Voice of America capture the essence of the vision of the past, of today and of tomorrow for the United States radios:

It is your task as the executive and participants in the Voice of America, to tell the story of American life around the world. This is an extremely difficult and sensitive task. On the one hand you are an arm of the Government and therefore an arm of the nation, and it is your task to bring our story around the world in a way which serves to represent democracy and the United States in its most favorable light. But on the other hand, as a part of the cause of freedom, and the arm of freedom you are obliged to tell our story in a truthful way, to tell it, as Oliver Cromwell said about his portrait: "Paint us with all our blemishes and warts, all those things about us that may not be so immediately attractive."^{xv}

ⁱFreedman, Samuel G. "What U.S. Image Will Linger?" *USA Today*. 1 Jan 2002.

[Online: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/2002-01-02-ncguest1.htm>] May 27, 2003.

ⁱⁱ The Beginning: An American Voice Greet the World. [Online:
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