

**Statement of the Broadcasting Board of Governors
Before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China
"Open Forum"
December 9, 2002**

China's Jamming of U.S. International Broadcasting

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) is the independent federal agency that oversees all U.S. nonmilitary international broadcasting, including the Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Asia (RFA).

Our mission, quite simply, is to "promote and sustain freedom and democracy by broadcasting accurate and objective news and information about the United States and the world." In China, however, we face a serious problem in fulfilling that mandate because Beijing is working hard to prevent the news we report from getting through to the Chinese people.

Even as China is actively trying to expand its role in the global marketplace, it is isolating its people, cutting off the free flow of information and denying citizens reliable and credible news from the United States, among other places.

The BBG, which monitors jamming with the assistance of the Federal Communications Commission, knows that virtually all of VOA's and RFA's shortwave radio transmissions directed to China in that country's languages are jammed. VOA broadcasts in Cantonese, Mandarin and Tibetan. RFA broadcasts in Cantonese, Mandarin, Tibetan and Uyghur.

Unfortunately, jamming seems to be on the rise, despite increased commercial and diplomatic contacts between the United States and China. In Lhasa, Tibet's capital city, for example, it is impossible to receive a good signal for VOA Tibetan, even though the service is on three or five frequencies, depending on the time of day.

As has been widely reported, the Chinese government also is determined to censor the fast-growing internet by blocking sites, including those of VOA www.voanews.com and RFA www.rfa.org. Researchers at Harvard Law School recently concluded China has the world's most censored internet, with the government blocking up to 19,000 websites. Additionally, email subscription services are blocked. The BBG - along with, we hope, all Americans -- is concerned about the Chinese government's actions for a number of reasons.

First, it's a human rights issue: Everyone is entitled to factual, uncensored information.

Second, the Chinese people know woefully little about the United States - and that's not good. Surveys show a disturbing 68 percent of urban dwellers in China consider the United States their country's number one enemy. By controlling outside media, the Chinese government has manipulated the news and stopped the United States from telling its side of the story. As a result, some 1.2 billion people are ill-informed about our people, our culture, our democracy, our freedoms and our government policies.

Not only are the Chinese government's actions wrong - they're unfair. While China jams VOA and RFA, the United States allows China's government television, CCTV, on many cable systems across the country. China Radio International, China's government radio, broadcasts unjammed on shortwave and on a

number of affiliated AM and FM radio stations in the United States. Of course, as a country that support a free exchange of views and ideas, we wouldn't have it any other way.

At the same time, the U.S. government has granted more than 40 journalists from China's state-run media permission to live and work in the United States without restriction. The same cannot be said about China where American journalists work under more stringent restrictions. Moreover, the Chinese have refused to increase from two the number of correspondents working for U.S. international broadcasting in China.

So what can be done? At a minimum, the issue needs to be brought to the forefront of the public agenda. Top administration officials already have promised to raise the issue with the Chinese through diplomatic channels and other discussions so we're hopeful that there might be some movement on that front.

The BBG also has filed complaints of "harmful interference" with the International Telecommunications Union monthly since August 2000, claiming Chinese jamming violates radio regulations. China first acknowledged receipt of the complaints in July 2002, and again in August 2002. Failure to acknowledge complaints is itself a violation of radio regulations. China insists, implausibly, that what we hear as jamming is merely an accidental overlap of broadcasts on the country's highly congested airwaves. The BBG believes these responses are duplicitous at best. Chinese officials have not responded positively to a U.S. request to discuss frequency management.

To overcome jamming, the BBG generally broadcasts on different frequencies to reach a broad geographic region. U.S. international broadcasting spends about \$9.5 million annually to transmit about 100,000 hours of RFA and VOA programming to China. Costs could be slashed about 25 percent if China ceased jamming. China spends a comparable amount to counter U.S. transmissions.

Finally, both VOA and RFA continue to research and experiment with proxy servers and mirror internet sites to circumvent the bamboo curtain.

But the bottom line is this: the United States, now engaged in a global war on terrorism, cannot afford to have 18 percent of the world's population misinformed about our country. We need a concerted strategy involving Congress and the Executive branch to grapple with this problem - and to stop the jamming.