

Countering Extremist Ideology through U.S. International Media Budget Justification

U.S. international media (USIM) plays a vital role in securing a more stable future for the people of Iraq by countering the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's (ISIL) influence in the region and by helping to stem the tide of incoming foreign fighters from around the globe.

USIM has extraordinary reach including a 36% weekly audience in Iraq. Our networks – Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN) in Arabic and the Voice of America (VOA) in Kurdish and Turkish – provide high-quality, credible journalism not aligned with any sect or political group, enabling USIM to cross sectarian divides and amplify the voices of moderate political and religious leaders as well as those of ordinary citizens with a stake in a stable future for the region.

Expand Information to All Iraqis

USIM's main goal is to support the creation of stable, open, and multi-cultural societies in the region. The opportunity for political participation, including by minority populations, is essential to rebuilding trust in the Iraqi government and accompanying political process.

In support of U.S. goals in Iraq, USIM will undertake the following activities:

Raise Your Voice Campaign (\$3,300,000)

USIM will lead a multi-platform initiative over television, radio and digital platforms (social media, web, mobile) to enable the broader Iraqi population to voice their opinions and discuss issues relevant to their daily lives. The campaign will target influencers active in civil society, the rebuilding of the economy, and the formation of workable national coalitions. It will create a non-sectarian arena for political and religious leaders as well as regular citizens, to comment, discuss, and constructively provide Iraqi leaders with a clear picture of their daily lives and their hopes for the future direction of their communities.

MBN will launch a new, fast-paced, 'Iraq Have Your Say'-type television/radio program, accompanied by a robust social media presence featuring live guests, spirited debates and call-in/social media segments allowing Iraqis to talk about their future.

Counter the ISIL Narrative: "Not in My Name" - *Laysa Bilismi* (\$400,000)

Muslims all over the world are beginning to rise up in protest and condemn the actions of ISIL by creating comedy skits and making musical parodies. MBN will co-produce and co-curate content that will collect the best examples of this phenomenon with an emphasis on humor/satire in the form of YouTube video, cartoons, and spoofs designed to go viral on social media. USIM will focus on puncturing the ISIL narrative of invincibility, while also highlighting the extent to which ISIL is at odds with local culture and custom.

Surge Programming Targeted at Refuting/Undercutting ISIL Propaganda (\$1,600,000)

VOA Kurdish will significantly ramp up its enterprise reporting from Iraqi Kurdistan and border areas with Turkey and Syria so as to gather more audio/video and digital content related to countering extremism and ISIL in particular. The Service will also increase its programming to the target regions, including beefing up "U.S. Bureau" reporting within the newscasts of major

television channels serving the Kurdish regions, while strengthening its digital and social presence to counter ISIL propaganda with facts. This surge is for content generation and stringers. No FTE are requested.

VOA Turkish programming, through key media affiliations that bring VOA content to primetime audiences, will focus on two key audiences: those individuals who exert influence in government, cultural and religious institutions, and the broader Turkish population. VOA Turkish, in collaboration with a major Turkish news network (TGRT), will double its existing programming to 30 minutes five days a week in prime time. Additionally, VOA Turkish, in collaboration with VOA Kurdish, will expand its partnership with Mynet, an independent online portal in Turkey strengthening beat coverage of the border areas with Iraq and Syria and the burgeoning refugee populations. This surge is for content generation and stringers. No FTE are requested.

Leverage USIM’s Global Platforms to Staunch the Flow of Foreign Fighters (\$1,000,000)

USIM plays a critical role in halting the flow of foreign fighters due to its broad reach into countries with high numbers of potential ISIL recruits. USIM will leverage its global platform to target these young audiences (15-24, primarily male) in key global markets known to feed foreign fighters to ISIL. VOA, in collaboration with MBN, will lead the effort to identify high quality content countering ISIL’s narrative and translate/re-package that content for distribution to its media partners in targeted countries. VOA will select content that shows the reality of ISIL’s tactics, countering the propaganda they produce and highlighting how ISIL does not represent Islamic or its values. USIM will also target the parents, relatives, and friends of potential recruits. These support networks can play a significant role in diverting loved ones from joining ISIL. Using television, radio and especially digital platforms (mobile/social), USIM will produce a mixture of new ‘fact check’ features and focused news reports and will amplify existing anti-ISIL satire. Our networks will target audiences in North Africa (MBN), Gulf States (MBN), Afghanistan/Pakistan (VOA), and the Balkans (VOA). No FTE are requested.

FY 2015 Budget Request (Updated)

BBG FY 2015 Budget Amendment Request (\$ in millions)		
FY 2015 Budget Request (current)	\$ 721.26	
Budget Amendment Request	\$ 6.30	
<i>Voice of America (VOA)</i>		\$ 2.60
<i>Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN)</i>		\$ 3.70
TOTAL FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST	\$ 727.56	

**Amendment Request for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funds*