

Summary

Adhering to the principles outlined in the Charter, VOA reporters and broadcasters must strive for accuracy and objectivity in all their work. They do not speak for the U.S. Government. They accept no treatment or assistance from U.S. Government officials or agencies that is more favorable or less favorable than that granted to staff of private sector news agencies. Furthermore, VOA professionals, careful to preserve the integrity of their organization, strive for excellence and avoid imbalance or bias in their broadcasts.

The Voice of America pursues its mission today in a world conflict-ridden and unstable in the post Cold War era. Broadcasting accurate, balanced and complete information to the people of the world, and particularly to those who are denied access to accurate news, serves the national interest and is a powerful source of inspiration and hope for all those who believe in freedom and democracy.

The Code

All staff who report, manage, edit and prepare programming at VOA in both central and language services therefore subscribe to these principles:

Sourcing

- VOA news and programming must be rigorously sourced and verified. VOA normally requires a minimum of two independent (non VOA) sources before any newswriter, background writer, political affairs writer, correspondent or stringer may broadcast information as fact in any language.

- The only exceptions to the double-source requirement are facts directly confirmed by a VOA journalist or significant news drawn from an official announcement of a nation or an organization. In those rare instances when a secondary source offers exclusive significant news (e.g., a verified news agency exclusive interview with a chief of state or prominent newsmaker), this story is attributed to the originating agency by name.

Accuracy and Balance

- Accuracy and balance are paramount, and together, they are VOA's highest

priority. Accuracy always comes before speed in VOA central service and language programming. VOA has a legal obligation to present a comprehensive description of events, reporting an issue in a reliable and unbiased way. Though funded by the U.S. Government, VOA airs all relevant facts and opinions on important news events and issues. VOA corrects errors or omissions in its own broadcasts at the earliest opportunity.

- VOA is alert to, and rejects, efforts by special interest groups, foreign or domestic, to use its broadcasts as a platform for their own views. This applies to all programs and program segments, including opinion or press roundups, programs discussing letters, listener comments or call-in shows. In the case of call-ins, views of a single party must be challenged by the interviewer if alternative opinions are unrepresented. In interviews, points of possible discussion are submitted in advance if requested by an interviewee of stature (e.g., a chief of state).

However, VOA journalists always retain the right and responsibility to pursue newsworthy angles, including entirely fresh lines of questioning, during such interviews.

- Whenever VOA reports a charge or accusation made by an individual or a group against another, or presents one side of a controversial issue, a response and/or balancing information will be included in the first use of a news item or feature containing that material. If the balancing information cannot be obtained by the program deadline, or the subject of the charge declines to comment, that will be made clear in VOA's account, and the balancing material will be broadcast as soon as it is available.

Fairness

- VOA has, in the words of the Founding Fathers, "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind." VOA is required to present a full and fair account of events. VOA broadcasters evaluate information solely on its merits, rejecting incitements to violence, sensationalism, personal value judgments or misleading emphases. Attributions are specific and complete.

- VOA journalists (including correspondents, news and language stringers, political affairs writers and program hosts) avoid at all times the use of unattributed

pejorative terms or labels to describe persons or organizations, except when the individuals and groups use those labels to describe themselves or their activities.

- In news, features and current affairs programming, VOA broadcasters will meticulously avoid fabricating, distorting or dramatizing an event. If sound at an event illustrates the reporter's account of that event and is edited for time, the remaining sound effect reflects what occurred in an accurate and balanced way. If there is a risk of misleading the audience, no use will be made of sound effects not actually recorded at the event being described.

Context and Comprehensiveness

- VOA presents a comprehensive account of America and the world, and puts events in context. That means constant vigilance to reflect America's and the world's political, geographical, cultural, ethnic, religious and social diversity. VOA programming represents the broadcast team's best effort to seek out and present a comprehensive account of the event or trend being reported.

- VOA broadcasters will avoid using announcing or interviewing techniques that add political coloration or bias to their reportage or current affairs programming. Music will not be used to make editorial statements. VOA journalists and all those preparing news and feature programming avoid any action or statement that might convey the appearance of partisanship.

Procedures

- When performing official duties, VOA broadcasters leave their personal political views behind. The accuracy, quality and credibility of the Voice of America are its most important assets, and they rest on listeners' perception of VOA as an objective source of world, regional and U.S. news and information. To that end, all VOA journalists will:

1. Always travel on regular, non-diplomatic passports, and rely no more and no less than private sector correspondents on U.S. missions abroad for support, as set out in the guidelines for VOA correspondents.
2. Assist managers whose duty is to ensure that no VOA employee, contract employee or

stringer works for any other U.S. Government agency, any official media of another state, or any international organization, without specific VOA authorization.

3. Adhere strictly to copyright laws and agency regulations and always credit the source when quoting, paraphrasing or excerpting from other broadcasting organizations, books, periodicals or any print media.

In addition to these journalistic standards and principles, VOA employees recognize that their conduct both on and off the job can reflect on the work of the Voice of America community. They adhere to the highest standards of journalistic professionalism and integrity. They work to foster teamwork, goodwill and civil discourse in the workplace and with their colleagues everywhere in the world, all to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the Voice of America.



JOURNALISTIC CODE

Preamble

*Since 1942, the Voice of America has built a global reputation as a consistently reliable source of news and information. Accuracy, balance, comprehensiveness and objectivity are attributes audiences around the world have come to expect of VOA broadcasters and their product. These standards are legally mandated in the VOA Charter (**Public Laws 94-350 and 103-415**). Because of them, VOA has become an inspiration and information lifeline to nations and peoples around the world.*