A Free Press Matters

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

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DALETPLUS: MEDIA-- >CATEGORIES-->MANUALS

A Free Press Matters

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

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THE VOA CHARTER

President Gerald Ford signed the VOA Charter (Public Law 94-350) into law on July 12, 1976. It protects the independence and integrity of VOA programming.

> 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 opinions on these policies.

INTRODUCTION

THIS GUIDE APPLIES TO ALL EMPLOYEES, CONTRACTORS AND STRINGERS WHO GATHER, PRODUCE, EDIT, TRANSLATE, PRESENT AND DISSEMINATE CONTENT FOR VOA

The purpose of this Guide is to define in more detail the journalistic standards and best practices that VOA full-time employees and contractors should follow every day. And it is a ***guide*** rather than a rulebook for one very good reason: although the increasingly changing news and information environment requires each of us to have a basic understanding of best practices, it goes without saying that every news event, every radio, TV and web piece, every social media post, every program, every interview – that is, **everything we cover, produce and disseminate – is unique and must be considered in context and on its own merits.**

VOA full-time employees and contractors are encouraged to bring issues not covered in this guide to the attention of their supervisors, Service Chiefs, Division Directors, the Editor for News Standards & Best Practices, VOA Senior Management or the Office of General Counsel as appropriate.

- There may be times when the News Center or a Language Service will be working on stories that allege wrongdoing. In those cases, the Office of General Counsel **must** be consulted. *(Also see Legal Issues, p. 99)*

It is everyone's responsibility to understand these best practices as well as to consider one's own sense of right and wrong. Credibility is the most precious commodity of any news organization. The only way to achieve and maintain that credibility is for everyone within VOA to accept responsibility for it.

WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK - DO NOT ASSUME

This guide will help, but should not replace, discussions of difficult issues with co-workers and supervisors. We grow as a news organization -- and policies are formed -- by asking questions and discussing the journalistic issues we face daily.

In addition to these journalistic guidelines, Federal employees are also required to follow the policies laid out by the Office of Government Ethics and USAGM's Ethics Counsel.

The Best Practices Guide is a living document and is updated regularly on SharePoint.

NEWS GATHERING

FAIRNESS, OBJECTIVITY & BALANCE

WHEN PERFORMING OFFICIAL DUTIES, VOA STAFF LEAVE THEIR PERSONAL POLITICAL VIEWS BEHIND

- All correspondents, producers, writers, editors and hosts should be aware of their own cultural values and personal beliefs and put them aside when preparing a report, conducting an interview, hosting a newscast, interview program, or posting on social media.

- The accuracy, quality and credibility of the Voice of America are its most important assets, and they rest on our audiences' perception of VOA as an objective and reliable source of U.S., regional and world news and information.

- VOA journalists -- including writers, correspondents, stringers, program hosts, and social media teams -- should always avoid the use of unattributed negative terms or labels to describe persons or organizations. The only exception is when the individuals and groups use those labels to describe themselves or their activities.

- Be fair to all of the people involved in a story. People who are presented in a negative light must be given a reasonable chance to present their side of the issue. If they refuse to comment, that should be noted. This demonstrates to our audience that we made the effort to be fair to all sides.

- A correspondent, producer or host should be well prepared with facts to balance the statement of one side or the other. Don't simply nod in acknowledgment when listening to someone's answer, as this could imply that you agree with that position.

- VOA journalists and all those preparing broadcast, website and social media programming must avoid any action or statement that might give the appearance of partisanship.
  This includes the wearing of lapel pins, religious symbols, clothing designs or color schemes that appear to support one party or individual over another.

THERE IS NO PLACE AT VOA FOR ADVOCACY JOURNALISM - THE PRESENTATION OF NEWS FROM ONE PARTICULAR VIEWPOINT OR ONE SPECIFIC AGENDA.

VOA JOURNALISTS CANNOT ACCEPT MONETARY PAYMENT OR GIFTS FROM ANY INDIVIDUAL, SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP, OR POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN EXCHANGE FOR NEWS COVERAGE. IT IS A VIOLATION OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS.

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- Other conflicts of interest, real or apparent, may come up, such as the relationship of staff members with VOA and USAGM management.
    - For instance, VOA journalists should avoid, where possible, covering an event where a speaker or panelist is from VOA – simply because VOA is represented at the event. If the event is one of journalistic value, the report should disclose and explain that VOA is represented at the event and cite the editorial reason for covering the event.

- VOA employees and contractors must carry out their work with the utmost professionalism. This applies equally to your work in the Cohen Building, the bureaus, and in the field. Professionalism and respect for your colleagues is absolutely vital to maintaining best practices. Whether in a newsroom, studio, control room or in the field, pursuit of a story is not an excuse for arrogance.

BIAS & DIVERSITY

One of the key areas for ensuring fairness, objectivity and balance in our reporting is to stay clear of bias or preconceived notions. Some examples:

- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, social status or physical appearance.

- The words we use in our scripts should be precise. For example, avoid the casual use of words and phrases like "illegal immigrant," "Third World" and "terrorist," or the assumption that "fundamentalism" equals violence. This is the latest guidance from the AP on writing about the "alt-right" and related terms. All VOA staff should read the guidance and follow it in our own reporting.

- Don't include a description of an individual unless it is essential to the story. If a description doesn't serve an editorial purpose, it may perpetuate negative stereotypes, possibly anger some members of a community and in all likelihood doesn't effectively advance the story.

- Coverage of events in a gay community should not be automatically linked to coverage of HIV/AIDS, because HIV/AIDS is not exclusive to gay communities.

- Correspondents, producers, video, photo and web editors must understand the possibility of racial or ethnic stereotyping when selecting images to include in stories. For example, in a story about unwed mothers in the U.S., should every mother shown be African American? If using file video about drug arrests in the U.S., should every person shown be African American or Hispanic? The clear answer is no.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

VOA STAFF CANNOT CAMPAIGN FOR OR ORGANIZE EVENTS FOR POLITICAL CANDIDATES

THAT IS A VIOLATION OF THE JOURNALISTIC ETHICS OF OBJECTIVITY, FAIRNESS AND BALANCE AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED AT ALL TIMES

THE HATCH ACT

The Hatch Act is a federal law; its main provision is to prohibit government employees in the Executive Branch from engaging in partisan political activity. The Office of General Counsel has provided some basic guidelines regarding political activity by VOA employees.

Employees **MAY NOT** engage in political activity while:

- On duty
- In any government office
- Using a government vehicle
- Wearing an official uniform or insignia

In addition, the following political activities are prohibited while **on duty**:

- Wearing campaign buttons and/or t-shirts
- Displaying campaign posters in the workplace
- Using **AGENCY** e-mail accounts, social media accounts or blogs to support or criticize a candidate or political position
- Using agency computers to make online campaign donations
- Using screensavers supporting or criticizing a candidate or political position
- Using agency-supplied smartphones to support or criticize a candidate or political position

NOTE: You are on duty when you are teleworking.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THESE GUIDELINES,
PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL AT 202-203-4550

POLITICAL REPORTING ON VOA WEBSITES

To avoid appearances of inappropriate endorsement or bias, if any VOANews.com website reports on a GOP or Democratic presidential debate and the story includes a link to the campaign website of one candidate, we must include the campaign websites of all the candidates who are taking part in the debate. The same holds true if we are reporting on candidates for the Senate, House and for governors.

We follow the same guidelines during the final presidential campaign period with regard to a sitting president and the opposing candidate/s. But in that case, the link for the sitting president **MUST BE TO THE CAMPAIGN'S WEBSITE, AND NOT TO WWW.WHITEHOUSE.GOV.**

EXCEPTION: For the 2020 election campaign, because President Trump uses his personal Twitter account on a daily basis, we should be checking @realdonaldtrump during the campaign in addition to any official account the campaign might create.

In other words, when reporting on U.S. political campaigns, all VOANews.com websites should follow the same journalistic balance and fairness that we strive for in all of our daily reporting.

For more complete guidance on the Hatch Act, please follow this link to the Office of General Counsel's Ethics page.

WRITING

VOA copy should be simple and straightforward. We are not writing treaties or scholarly reports. For example, use "stop the fighting" rather than "achieve the cessation of hostilities." Most of our writing is for people whose first language is not English, so avoid excessively difficult words, and explain them when you must use them.

Avoid colloquialisms and jargon, which may be difficult to translate and are not easily understood by foreign audiences. When used, as in a direct quotation, provide an alternative in parentheses to assist language services.

- The convicted hacker said writing the virus was "a piece of cake" (very easy).
- He spoke "off the cuff" (without notes).
- The House Minority Whip (the number two Republican/Democrat in the House).
- He made a killing (made a lot of money) in the stock market.

Words such as "biggest," "highest," "first" and others like them should be used judiciously because they often turn out to be incorrect. Ask yourself whether the fact that something is first is truly significant. Avoid superlatives such as "most famous" or "greatest," which often represent value judgments. Descriptive and colorful words are encouraged, but use caution. Something that is "unique" is the only one of its kind. A thing or event cannot be "somewhat unique." Other words describing extreme situations should also raise flags for writers and editors, and should be scrutinized to ensure they are justified. "Trouble" in a city does not necessarily mean it is in "chaos." "Asking urgently" is not necessarily "pleading" or "begging." If a situation is "desperate" today, what will it be tomorrow when things get worse?

It is acceptable, however, to use words like these when you're quoting someone directly.

SOURCING

Whenever possible, a source should be "on the record" – someone who is willing to be named and quoted. However, journalists routinely rely on sources who won't go on the record. If a source refuses to be named, the information he or she provides must be characterized in other ways, as clearly as possible.

A REQUEST FOR CONFIDENTIALITY SHOULD COME FROM THE SOURCE AND NOT SUGGESTED BY THE CORRESPONDENT OR PRODUCER.

However, your editor has a right to know the name of the source if he or she asks for it.

AN UNNAMED SOURCE MUST HAVE VERIFIABLE AND FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE OF THE STORY

Before using an unnamed source, you must be certain that there is no other way to get the information on the record. You must be convinced the source knows what he/she is talking about, and you should consider asking for actual evidence to support the source's claim or comment. When discussing third-party information with a source, be sure that the source is actually confirming the information from his or her knowledge of a particular situation, and is not simply hearing it from you and agreeing that it is plausible.

Avoid extremely vague terms such as "unnamed sources" or "unidentified sources," "informed sources," "authoritative sources," "well-placed sources," "reliable sources."

You should be willing to tell our audience why the source cannot be named. For example, you can say, "The source's name is being withheld to protect against possible reprisals."

A story that relies on the use of confidential/unnamed sources should be of public concern. We are not interested in "gotcha" stories just for the sake of the "gotcha," nor are we interested in scoring scoops just for the sake of being first (and possibly being wrong).

There will be times when multiple news outlets report information from unnamed sources during a breaking story, as with the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013.

As happened with Boston – when multiple news organizations said there was an arrest and VOA reported that information – we will later find out that that information is incorrect. In those cases VOA will issue a correction as quickly as possible across all platforms.
(Also see Corrections, p. 97)

The following characterizations will help to establish with a source what level of confidentiality you have agreed to. In all cases it is always best to clarify with the source how the information may be used:

- **ON THE RECORD**
  All information is suitable for publication and attributable to the source by name and title.

- **OFF THE RECORD**
  Material that is "off the record" is not directly usable, but the information can be used to focus the direction of a story. Off-the-record material may also be a valid second source to confirm information obtained elsewhere.

- **ON BACKGROUND**
  "On background" is generally understood to mean the information given can be used, provided it is attributed to a generic source. "A senior administration official called the election flawed."

- **DEEP BACKGROUND**
  Information obtained on "deep background" is normally provided with the understanding that it will not be sourced directly in any way. Acceptable wording might be, "It was learned that the delegates agreed to a second meeting on Tuesday."

- **PUBLICATION OF A SIGNIFICANT STORY BASED UPON A SINGLE SOURCE WHO WILL NOT ALLOW HIS OR HER NAME TO BE USED MUST ALWAYS BE APPROVED IN ADVANCE BY VOA SENIOR MANAGEMENT.**

- **UPON REQUEST, DISCLOSURE OF A SOURCE'S IDENTITY TO VOA SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND TO THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL MAY BE REQUIRED TO CLEAR THE SOURCED INFORMATION FOR AIR.**

- **WHEN DISCUSSING CONFIDENTIALITY WITH A SOURCE, IT MAY BE ADVISABLE TO EXPLAIN THE POSSIBILITY OF THIS LIMITED DISCLOSURE WITHIN VOA. REFUSAL TO DISCLOSE THE SOURCE MAY RESULT IN THE SOURCE'S INFORMATION NOT BEING USED BY VOA.**

(Also see Reporter's Privilege & Confidential Sources, p. 105)

RUMORS & SPECULATION

VOA avoids the use of rumors and speculation in news items. However, this should be carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis in instances where a rumor or speculation takes on a life of its own. In general, reporters, producers and editors should seek out responsible officials to respond to the rumors or speculation and use those comments as our entry to the story. Without an official comment, VOA should avoid being first to publicize a rumor or speculation.

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ATTRIBUTION

WE GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

Proper attribution is a fundamental element of good journalism.

Aside from the material provided by our own correspondents and stringers, VOA receives news from a number of different outlets: ABC News, Agence France Presse, the Associated Press and Reuters, as well as from newspapers, television news networks and official news agencies of other nations.

Story information can also come from press releases put out by corporations or private groups such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). When using press releases, they must be identified as such, and if applicable, they should be counter-balanced.

When VOA quotes exclusive information from news stories or uses quotes from editorials, opinion pieces or social media posts, it is mandatory to credit the media organization, NGO or other outlet. Not including that information can open VOA to possible claims of plagiarism and/or copyright infringement.
(Also see Crediting the News Agencies, p. 20 and Plagiarism, p. 24)

One method of providing attribution is in the use of block quotes. In the example below, *VOX.com* provided a hyperlink to a *Washington Post* story about "Pizzagate," but also included part of the Post's story in a "block," shown by the solid bar on the left. This is acceptable for use on voanews.com websites, but it should not be used repeatedly.

The conspiracy theory, known as "Pizzagate," apparently connected Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign to a nonexistent child sex ring at the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria, **Faiz Siddiqui and Susan Svrluga reported for the Washington Post**:

> The restaurant's owner and employees were threatened on social media in the days before the election after fake news stories circulated claiming that then-Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton and her campaign chief were running a child sex ring from the restaurant's backrooms. Even Michael Flynn, a retired general whom President-elect Trump has tapped to advise him on national security, shared stories about another anti-Clinton conspiracy theory involving pedophilia. None of them were true. But the fake stories and threats persisted, some even aimed at children of Comet Ping Pong employees and patrons. The restaurant's owner was forced to contact the FBI, local police, Facebook and other social-media platforms in an effort to remove the articles.

Information that comes directly from the U.S. government – the White House, State Department, Pentagon or Congress – is considered valid on its own, **but must still be attributed.**

On a breaking news story, AP or Reuters may quote a single source such as a police official or a government spokesperson. In those cases our copy will attribute the information to the wire service and say that VOA is working to confirm the information.

Information in News Center stories does not require additional sourcing.

There are times when the attribution can be left unstated because the source of a particular statement is both obvious and authoritative.

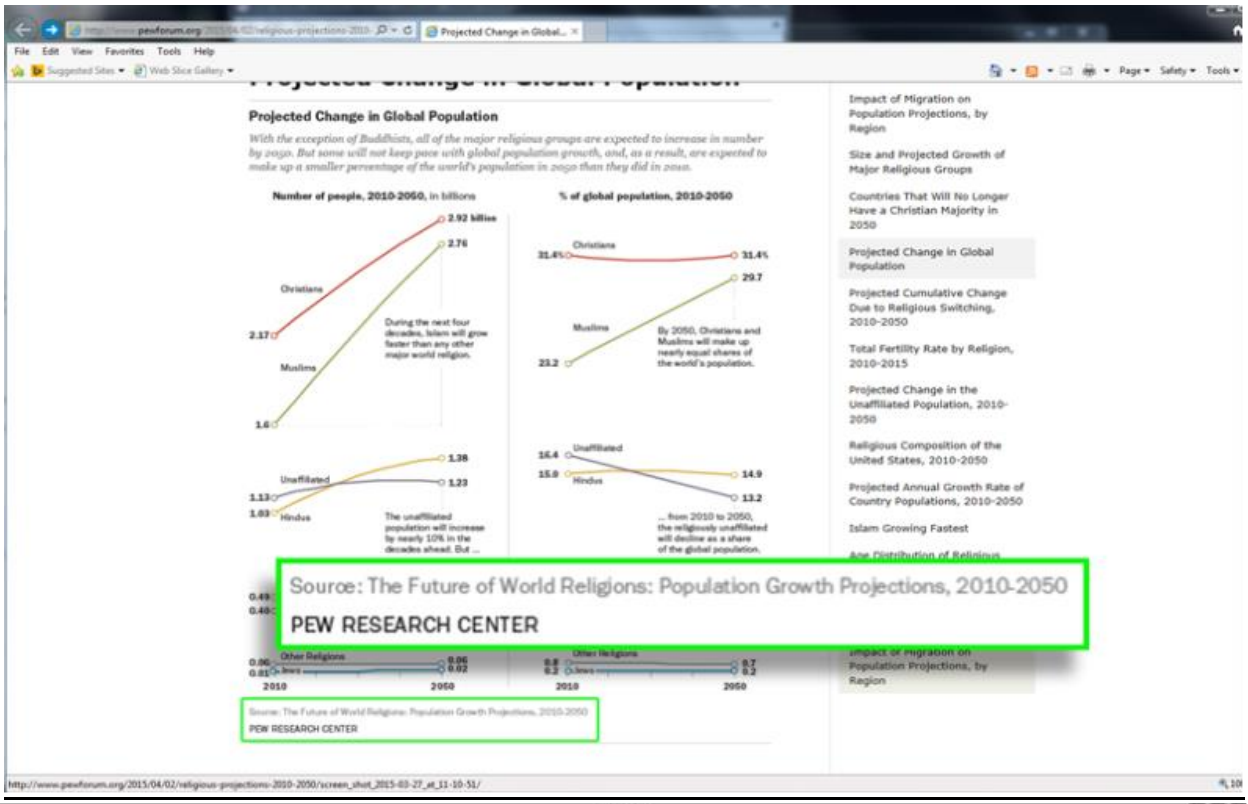
> **An example of over-attribution:**
> *The U.S. space agency NASA says astronauts aboard the space shuttle "Discovery" performed a second spacewalk today.*
>
> **It's better, and easier, to write:**
> *Astronauts aboard the U.S space shuttle "Discovery" performed a second spacewalk today.*

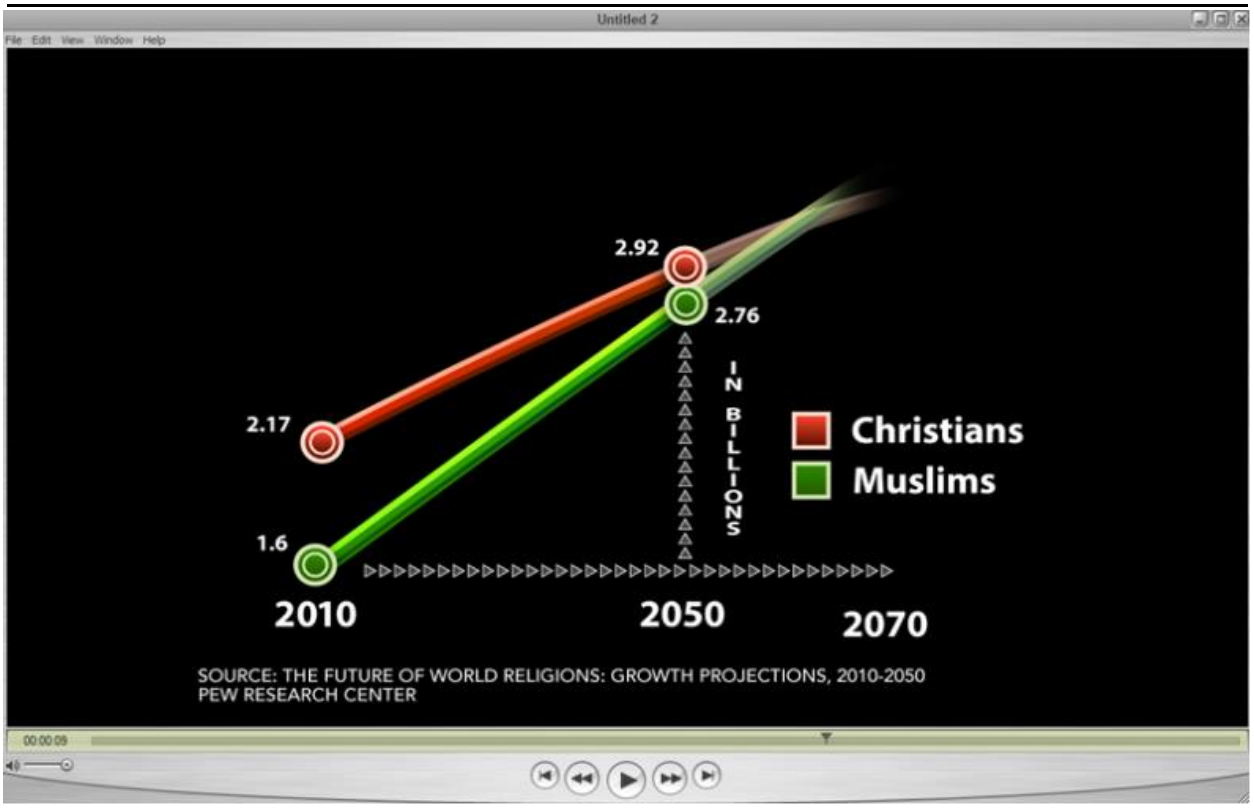
In the course of our reporting, we often will cite information or statistics that come from think tanks, NGOs, or another government agency. Aside from crediting those groups in scripts, they must also be credited in full-screen graphics, whether as a stand-alone page or within a video package.

FULL SCREEN GRAPHICS

- While styles and looks may differ for various Language Services, the basic procedure should be the same.

- Any time a graphic is based on information or statistics that are not originally generated by VOA, a small info source attribution needs to be included on the graphic.
  See the photos on the next page, identifying the correct attribution.


Projected Change in Global Population
With the exception of Buddhists, all of the major religious groups are expected to increase in number by 2050. But some will not keep pace with global population growth, and, as a result, are expected to make up a smaller percentage of the world's population in 2050 than they did in 2010.
Number of people, 2010-2050, in billions
% of global population, 2010-2050
Christians
Muslims
Unaffiliated
Hindus
2.92 billion
2.76
2.17
1.6
1.38
1.23
1.13
1.03
31.4%
29.7
23.2
16.4
15.0
14.9
13.2
Impact of Migration on Population Projections, by Region
Size and Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups
Countries That Will No Longer Have a Christian Majority in 2050
Projected Change in Global Population
Projected Cumulative Change Due to Religious Switching, 2010-2050
Total Fertility Rate by Religion, 2010-2015
Projected Change in the Unaffiliated Population, 2010-2050
Religious Composition of the United States, 2010-2050
Projected Annual Growth Rate of Country Populations, 2010-2050
Islam Growing Fastest
Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050
PEW RESEARCH CENTER


Untitled 2
2.92
2.76
2.17
1.6
IN BILLIONS
Christians
Muslims
2010
2050
2070
SOURCE: THE FUTURE OF WORLD RELIGIONS: GROWTH PROJECTIONS, 2010-2050
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

WIKIPEDIA SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED OR USED AS A PRIMARY SOURCE OF INFORMATION

There have been a number of incidents where material posted on Wikipedia has not been verified or has proven to be incorrect. Any information found on Wikipedia should be confirmed with other, more reliable sources, or with the News Center.

OPENSOURCE

The U.S. government-funded news portal OpenSource is an important tool for finding source information. VOA uses the text material in OpenSource as a second source of news and information.

OpenSource can be found in DaletPlus/Webspace at **WIRES→OPENSOURCE→ALL WIRES**

However, **VOA DOES NOT HAVE ACCESS** to the audio and video which OpenSource posts from news organizations -- BBC, Sky News and Al Jazeera English, for example -- with whom VOA **does not have contractual agreements.**

CREDITING THE NEWS AGENCIES

To make sure that our best practices are in sync with our news agency contracts, below is guidance on how VOA should credit the agencies across all platforms. Note that each platform has different guidelines, and everyone should be aware of the differences, especially if you're producing a story that will appear on all platforms.

RADIO

- AFP, AP and Reuters have all confirmed that VOA radio broadcasts can use their news wire copy verbatim without verbal attribution or credit. All three agencies consider this to be "standard use" of their material.

- However, if one wire service has an exclusive interview or information that other news organizations do not have, we should give that wire service verbal credit in the broadcast.
  (Also see Audio Usage Rights, p. 69)

TELEVISION

- Although the individual news agency IDs and the Dot are burned into agency video as they are being recorded in DaletPlus, it is preferable that all video pieces -- whether produced by the News Center or by a Language Service – should note in the DaletPlus Asset Management Form the time segments where ABC NewsOne, AFP, AP and Reuters video are used. That is our way of tracking/crediting them for the usage, and for the Senior Archivists to know whether the material is worth keeping.

- Video downloaded from the ABC, AFP, AP and Reuters websites must have the proper ID added to the video before it is broadcast or published. This is a requirement of our contracts with our providers.
  (Also see Video Usage Rights, p. 71, Documenting Source Video in DaletPlus, p. 80 and News Agency IDs and the Dot, p. 81)

- Verbal credit to the news agencies is not required for video reports, **unless the video is exclusive and is noted as such in the agency's script.**

WEB

It has long been the practice in print to credit the wire services when using their stories in whole or in part. All VOA websites and social media pages should follow this practice.

- How the credit looks when using a single news agency's wire story in full, with the agency's name at the top.

- How the credit looks when using more than one agency's wire story, with the agencies' names at the bottom.

- Agency photos used on VOA websites and on agency-maintained social media pages must include a captioned credit to the agency.

BYLINES

VOA frequently publishes stories with contributions from News Center and language service journalists. This is an explanation of the News Center's policy on how contributions should be credited in the script and how to determine who receives the byline on the finished web story. There are also several examples showing who would earn the byline under different reporting scenarios.

Story script headers in DaletPlus have three fields related to tracking reporter contributions, noted here in bold:
((TITLE:
HEAD:
TEASER:
TWEET:
DATE:
PUBLISHED AT:
(Press Alt+D here before publishing to generate a timestamp)
NUMBER:
WEB BYLINE:
CONTRIBUTING:
WRITER:
DATELINE:
AUDIO:
VIDEO:
WEB:
TYPE: OCN
UPDATE:))

- When creating a story in D+, the **writer** is the journalist who actually composed/updated/ corrected the written text. If a story is updated, with minor additions, the writer field must be updated as well, so that later questions can be directed to the relevant person. If an editor updates a story, the editor's name goes into the writer field.
- The **contributing** credit goes to reporters who provided key information for a story that ended up in the final copy, but who are not involved in actually writing the story.
- The **web** byline entry follows the bylines policy detailed on the next page.
- **ONLY** the **web** byline and/or the **contributing** line are published online.

It is the responsibility of all writers and correspondents to know the bylines policy and fill out the template accurately. News desk editors should ensure that this is done correctly before publishing, so that it is clearly laid out for the Web editors.

DETERMINING WHO GETS THE WEB BYLINE

A web byline depends in part on whether there is original reporting in the story. The News Center's byline policy tries to highlight when a reporter is on location where a story is occurring, and/or when we have original content.

The next sections explain the byline policy for reporters working out of VOA's headquarters and the policy for reporters working in the field. When reporters are on location filing material to a writer/editor on the news desk, VOA generally follows AP's byline policy, linked below.

VOA HQ-BASED JOURNALISTS

For journalists based in VOA's headquarters in Washington, a byline on a story requires correspondence with a news source that makes it into the story – whether that's a phone call, an email, a Twitter direct message etc.

For example: Watching a news event live on TV, and combining that with a press release is not "byline worthy." However, if the writer/reporter gets something additional information from a source, and that content is included in the published story, then the writer/reporter will get the byline. Stories that do not meet the byline standard, but are considered still worth publishing, will carry a generic VOA News byline instead of a reporter's name.

AP allows bylines only from reporters who have a relevant dateline. VOA, however, allows bylines from writers and reporters working inside its main Washington headquarters whose reporting meets the byline standard.

BUREAU & FIELD REPORTERS

AP recommends that reporters who are filing from location for a story get first billing on a byline – even if much of the story is actually written by someone on their desk. For VOA, if the desk writer or editor also contributes original reporting, then it would be left to the discretion of the final editor to determine whether the work merits a shared byline or contributor mention.

NEWS CENTER POLICY ON PSEUDONYMS & "PEN NAMES"

The News Center does not permit reporters to use pseudonyms as bylines on English language news stories. The main reason for this is that fabricating a reporter's identity undermines VOA's credibility.

For reporters who do not wish to have their name on a story for security issues or other valid reasons, the News Center will use a generic VOA News byline. Additional explanatory information can be included in a contributor line, should the reporter wish to highlight why his or her real name cannot be used.

For example:
"A VOA employee working in Pakistan contributed to this report. The reporter's name is being withheld because of ongoing threats against journalists in the country."

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"A VOA Mandarin service journalist wrote this report. VOA is declining to name the reporter because of Chinese government policies that threaten journalists and their extended families."

If a reporter does not want to use his or her name in a voiced TV or radio report, the intro and the signoff may omit it. A possible final line for an intro: "We have this report from our West Africa bureau in Dakar." For the signoff the reporter would say, "…VOA News, West Africa bureau."

BYLINE EXAMPLES INVOLVING MULTIPLE JOURNALISTS

- A language service interviews a newsmaker or analyst and sends the news desk the interview audio, which a writer uses in an OCN.
  WEB BYLINE: VOA News
  CONTRIBUTING: Language service reporter name(s)
  WRITER: Writer's name

- A language service reporter/stringer is on the scene of a breaking news event overseas and sends in quotes from eyewitnesses and color from the scene. A writer takes the material, and shapes it into a story, adding context and background.
  WEB BYLINE: Language service reporter/stringer
  CONTRIBUTING: None (unless writer also calls an analyst/contributes original material)
  WRITER: Writer's name

- A language service sends quotes from an interview with an analyst for a breaking news story that the news desk has already written by monitoring live broadcasts and using news wires. The writer updates the story, adding the new material.
  WEB BYLINE: VOA News
  CONTRIBUTING: Language service reporter name(s)
  WRITER: Writer's name

- An overseas correspondent files on a breaking news story in the coverage region. A language service reporter later gets additional reaction and sends the information to the news desk to use to update the story.
  WEB BYLINE: Overseas correspondent
  CONTRIBUTING: Language service reporter name(s)
  WRITER: Writer's name

PLAGIARISM

PLAGIARISM IS ILLEGAL AND UNETHICAL AND STRIKES AT THE VERY HEART OF OUR JOURNALISTIC MISSION.

IT CAN COST THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE AGENCY ITS CREDIBILITY AND REPUTATION, AND WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

WE DO NOT PRESENT OTHERS' WORK AS OUR OWN

ALLEGATIONS OF PLAGIARISM WILL BE FULLY INVESTIGATED, AND STAFFERS WILL BE NOTIFIED OF ANY SUCH ALLEGATIONS.

PLAGIARISM MAY RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION, UP TO AND INCLUDING REMOVAL FROM FEDERAL SERVICE

The Poynter Institute offers this excellent guidance for identifying plagiarism.

DRONES

The use of drones is heavily regulated, and VOA journalists must follow both governmental restrictions and VOA policies.

It is illegal to operate an unmanned aerial system/drone (UAS) for business purposes in the United States without advance approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Prospective VOA drone users must obtain a Remote Pilot Certificate (the official title for a drone pilot license) prior to any field usage of a drone.

DRONE USAGE BY VOA-AFFILIATED PERSONNEL IS RESTRICTED TO PROPERLY LICENSED DRONE PILOTS.

VOA drone pilots will follow the FAA'S rules and respect all restrictions, including those imposed locally by police or emergency service agencies. VOA journalists contracting for drone services must also be aware of laws and safety regulations governing their use.

When a drone will be used to cover a story, advance notice via email must be sent to the VOA Deputy Director for Programming (jlippman@voanews.com; 202-203-4325) or the Editor for News Standards & Best Practices (sspringer@voanews.com; 202-203-4276). A summary of the story and location of the shoot should be included in the email.

VOA will use guidelines from the Professional Society of Drone Journalists (www.dronejournalism.org) to determine drone usage:

- **NEWSWORTHINESS:** The story must be of sufficient importance to risk using a potentially harmful drone. Do not use a drone if the information or aerial perspective can be gathered by other, safer means.
- **SAFETY:** A drone pilot must be properly trained in the operation of the equipment. The equipment must be in a condition suitable to safe and controlled flight. A drone must not fly in weather conditions that exceed the limits of the drone's ability to operate safely. A drone must be flown in a manner that ensures the safety of the public and is least disruptive to the general population in a public setting. A Pilot's first drone flight should **not** be when shooting a story.
- **REGULATIONS AND PUBLIC SPACES:** A drone pilot must follow the regulations that apply to the airspace where the drone is used.
- **PRIVACY:** Use of a drone must never compromise the privacy of non-public figures. VOA journalists should not use images of private citizens in private spaces that are encountered beyond the scope of their stories.

VOA will own and operate drones for use in the United States subject to government regulations and VOA procedures. *(See Flight Operations, p. 27)*

Drones will be standardized as specified by the Office of the Chief Digital Officer, which will inventory and house them in Washington, D.C. or selected domestic bureaus. Drones will be registered with the Federal Aviation Administration (https://registermyuas.faa.gov/) in the name of VOA. Like other VOA technical equipment, purchases of drones will be approved in advance by the VOA Chief Digital Officer (jtunnessen@voanews.com; 202-382-5420) or his designee.

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Although VOA will own and operate drones within the United States, VOA will **NOT** own and operate drones outside the United States.

Unlike the FAA in the U.S., neither the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) nor the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) have established general usage or legal guidelines for drone operations. Regulations vary from country to country, frequently change, and may not yet be established. For instance, there is no listing of drone regulations for Iran. However, the Global Drone Regulations Database, is an international directory containing summaries of countries' drone laws, if known.

VOA journalists requiring a drone outside the U.S. will need to rent drone services from a pilot/operator licensed for the particular country in which the shoot is planned. They will also be expected to search the database to make sure VOA will not inadvertently violate regulations for the country in which the shoot is planned.

Contracting for drone services outside the country, like contracting for other external services, should be requested in advance from VOA Broadcast Operations, which will work with the IBB Office of Contracts to arrange services. Once drone services are secured, language services should advise the Deputy Director of Programming (jlippman@voanews.com) or the News Standards & Best Practices Editor (sspringer@voanews.com) of the name of the drone pilot and the drone's registration information.

NOTE: **Nothing in this section prevents VOA journalists from obtaining drone footage taken by non-VOA personnel who have acted independently of VOA.** User-generated drone video will be governed by the same standards and verifications as other independently gathered video used by VOA, prior to its use. *(Also see User-Generated Content, p. 54)*

THE DRONE CREW

There are three operations roles in drone flight: Pilot, Observer, and Journalist. Although a single individual can fill all three roles, VOA will normally have at least two people involved in any drone flight: a Pilot and a combination Observer/Journalist. The three roles are defined as follows:

- **PILOT:** Responsible for all flight operations and the ultimate authority on any flight. The Pilot determines if the aircraft is airworthy and capable of conducting the proposed operations in the available airspace, and is responsible for conducting operations within all FAA regulations (and any restrictions set forth by a "grant of exemption" from the FAA). The Pilot must brief the other members of the crew about the specifics of the mission, their roles and responsibilities, and what is expected of them before, during and after flight operations. The Pilot – the person holding the FAA-issued Part 107 certificate – is by regulation the final authority on whether the drone flies or not. The Pilot's decision on flight safety is final.
- **OBSERVER:** Responsible for monitoring the operational area to ensure that there are no hazards that may endanger the flight or people. The Observer is the only member of the team who should speak to the Pilot during flight operations. The Observer is to alert the Pilot if any aircraft come into the area, or if any person or vehicle comes near the operation. The Observer should remain within speaking distance of the Pilot.

- **JOURNALIST:** Responsible for communicating flight goals before the flight and verifying results after the drone lands. Defines the aerial elements needed for the story, but is subordinate to the Pilot, who has responsibility for determining if the Journalist's goals are possible under the conditions presented.

FLIGHT OPERATIONS

VOA drone pilots should use either the checklists at Kittyhawk.io or the ones listed below. Pre-trip and pre-flight inspections help ensure airworthiness and will serve as an early warning for both maintenance issues and for mechanical issues that could substantially affect or cancel flight operations or safety.

PRE-TRIP: Pre-trip and prior to embarking on any drone operation, the Pilot must gather information about the proposed flight area to ensure operations comply with FAA safety regulations. The Pilot should view publicly available aerial images of the area or personally conduct a site survey that will enable him/her to answer questions about the proposed flight location and be confident of success in the mission, including:

- What is there?
- Are there hazards to aviation?
- What airspace is it in?
- Do we need permission from air traffic control (ATC)?
- Are we flying on or over private property? Do we have permission of the landowner to operate there?
- How many people might be in or around the area? What is our plan to prevent flight over people?
- How high above sea level is the location? How will the altitude affect the performance of your drone during flight?

Prior to the day of the shoot, the Pilot and Observer/Journalist should meet to define the goals of the drone shoot and specific mission goals, including:

- What shots do you need (specific expected shots, angles, or subjects)?
- What purpose is the drone serving in your story?
- What context is the drone adding to your story?
- How much drone video or photograph do you need to tell the story?
- What privacy issues can you anticipate and what steps have you taken to lessen them?
- What the operations area looks like.
- What the expected weather will be.
- Any known hazards.

Prior to the shoot itself, the Pilot should also practice with the drone assigned for use.

PRE-FLIGHT: Pre-flight operations are done immediately before any flight work is to occur. The pre-flight checklist repeats some of the pre-trip checklist, such as inspecting the aircraft and some of the control surfaces. On the day of the shoot, before leaving for the operations area, the Pilot should conduct a pre-trip inspection of the drone, including:

- Charging batteries.
- That there are sufficient fully charged batteries to compensate for the possible effects of temperature on the batteries.
- Checking various mounting hardware.
- Checking the camera and storage media to ensure it is sufficient for the shoot.
- Verifying that weather parameters are within FAA Part 107 minimums, as determined by consulting an ***aviation*** weather forecast or weather report (METAR) or from obtaining a flight briefing from Flight Services.
- Verifying that the Journalist has informed local police or fire agencies that we will be using news-gathering drones.

Once on site, the Pilot will conduct the pre-flight inspection, connect the batteries, etc., and delineate a takeoff and landing area of at least 10 feet x 10 feet and ensure it is free of debris. S/he may also assign the Journalist or other VOA personnel on site to ensure that bystanders don't inadvertently walk into either the takeoff/landing zone or under the drone's flight path.

IN FLIGHT: The "In Flight" checklist isn't really a checklist. It's a "Do Constantly" list, noted as a reminder for all journalists using drones. While in flight, personnel involved in the shoot must:

- Be constantly scanning for airborne traffic or obstacles. The Observer (in most cases, the Journalist) must report them immediately to the Pilot.
- Be constantly scanning for people on the ground in the flight area. The Observer must report them immediately to the Pilot.
- Be constantly checking battery levels, ensuring that the drone is returned to the landing area before reaching 25% of capacity remaining.
- Be constantly checking flight parameters such as altitude to ensure they remain within restrictions and operational goals.

Any changes to the operational plan should be discussed only at the time of battery changes.

POST-FLIGHT:

ALL POST-FLIGHT LOGS MUST BE ENTERED IN KITTTYHAWK.IO.

The post-flight checklist is broken into three parts: shutting down the drone, inspecting the aircraft, and filling out logs. Logging is an essential part of drone safety. It forms the basis of the permanent record documenting maintenance of the drone VOA needs. Among other things, pilots should document any issue that should be checked or fixed between flights, drone usage (times of takeoffs and landings), problems during flight, and battery usage.

DRONE RESTRICTIONS

The FAA's website provides complete information on approved flights and operations. VOA personnel involved in drone use should familiarize themselves with the contents of the site. For news coverage by drone within the United States, these restrictions are most relevant:

Waivers to restrictions must be obtained in writing from the FAA. Without a written waiver, VOA will operate its drones in compliance with posted laws and regulations.

ACCIDENTS

By using licensed drone pilots and having a rigorous system of approvals of drone usage, VOA will minimize the instances of mishaps or accidents involving drones. Should VOA personnel be involved in accidents or injuries involving drones, the pilot and the VOA reporter/producer of the story must separately notify their service chief and division director, plus the VOA Deputy Director of Programming (jlippman@voanews.com) and the Office of the Chief Digital Officer (jtunnessen@voanews.com). The drone pilot is required by law to notify both the Federal Aviation Agency and the National Transportation Safety Board of accidents that either cause injuries or at least $500 in damage to property.

Website contacts for the FAA and NTSB are below:
https://www.faa.gov/uas/report_accident/
https://ntsb.gov/investigations/process/Documents/NTSB-Advisory-Drones.pdf

ARCHIVING DRONE FOOTAGE

All high quality drone footage must go in the archives within 3 weeks of the original shoot.

If the drone operator will be editing the video, he/she should copy the footage, edit down to the best footage, and work with the Media Asset Management team to supply the metadata and get the video into the archive. If the operator does not edit, the producer must take on the responsibility.

No one will be granted continued access to a drone unless the footage from their previous shoot has been processed in the archive system. The Media Asset Management team has been alerted to tag the content as DRONE footage in the metadata, so users can easily search the database for the video.

This is a critical part of the return on the investment of training, purchasing and maintaining the drones.

HIDDEN CAMERAS & MICROPHONES

VOA does not ordinarily support the use of hidden cameras or microphones for newsgathering. If extraordinary circumstances prompt you to think of doing so, you **must provide in advance** justification why it is necessary.

CLEARANCE MUST COME FROM THE VOA DIRECTOR'S OFFICE,
THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL AND THE NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES EDITOR.

SENSITIVE & GRAPHIC MATERIAL

Newsworthiness should be the primary factor in deciding whether to air or publish audio or video that may be offensive to our audiences. Some examples include murder scenes, acts of war, acts of nature, or faces of victims.

In most cases, VOA should not broadcast or publish the moment of death in a suicide, execution, or any similar event. Exceptions might include circumstances where an event is being covered live and the action is unexpected or spontaneous, or where the event is so highly newsworthy as to warrant broadcast or posting. If it happens during live coverage, explain to the audience what has happened as quickly as possible, and move on.

The broadcasting or posting of graphic, profane, racist or other objectionable language should be determined if it is essential to the newsworthiness of the story.

Material of a sexual nature is also a cause for concern, as people of all ages listen to, watch and read VOA news stories. Questions to be asked: Is the material essential to the story? Should video be digitized in some way so as not to be offensive? Would you want your children to see such images?

If it's determined the material will be broadcast or posted online, a mandatory warning needs to be provided far enough ahead of the story to make sure children do not see or hear the material. If the material is posted online, it should not be on the homepage. Rather, a link to the story should appear on the homepage, with a warning that sexual/graphic images are included with the story.

YouTube has a blurring tool that lets you blur any part of a video, including moving objects.
(Also see YouTube Guidelines, p. 58)

IN THESE CASES, THE EDITOR FOR NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES AND/OR VOA SENIOR MANAGEMENT WILL DETERMINE WHETHER TO POST SUCH IMAGES OR AUDIO, AND WILL ISSUE A HOUSE-WIDE NOTE DETAILING MANDATORY LANGUAGE TO ADVISE OUR AUDIENCE OF THE CONTENT.

The following sections explain these guidelines in greater detail.

COVERING WAR

Given the many nationalities and ethnicities that VOA reaches via radio, TV and online, it's important to follow some basic guidelines in covering and reporting conflicts.

LOADED WORDS

VOA should never use "we," "us, "our" or "they," "them" and "their" in reporting about any side in a conflict. VOA practice is to name the country, as in "U.S. troops" or "Pakistani troops."

No side in a conflict should be referred to as "the enemy," or any territory as "enemy territory" in copy or in graphics. The only exception is if you are directly quoting someone making those references.

Referring to attacks as "punishing," "brutal" or "successful" can imply that VOA is taking sides. Again, the only exception would be if you're directly quoting someone making those claims.

REPORTING COMBAT ACTIVITY

As a rule, VOA should not report that warplanes or missiles are approaching a target. When an attack is underway, VOA will report it:

- If we're able to independently confirm that bombs/missiles have hit the ground; or
- If the country being attacked confirms it's being attacked; or
- If an official of an attacking country directly tells VOA that an attack is happening; or
- If VOA observes the attack first-hand

In all of the above cases, attribution **MUST** be as clear and as specific as possible.
(Also see Attribution, p. 16)

When information originates only from state-owned media, we should make that clear to audiences the entire time the information is used.
(Also see Using Content From State-Run Media, p. 90)

If VOA's reporting is being censored or shut down and/or VOA's movements are being restricted, that should also be reported.

COVERING TERRORISM

Generally, terrorism is defined as "the use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce, especially for political purposes." Terrorists use violence against (often innocent) individuals to advance their political or ideological agenda. "Terrorism" and "terrorist" carry a lot of weight, and they should be used with extreme care. It is up to editors to determine if they are most appropriate terms to use.

VOA will report the actions of terrorists (bombings, shootings, hostage takings) fully, accurately and without taking sides, as we would cover any other news story. Wherever possible, we should also provide appropriate coverage of the victims, their injuries and their families.

We will provide our audiences with informative analyses of terrorist organizations, their ideology and history, but at the same time VOA must never suggest that reporting the context in which terrorism takes place justifies terrorism in any way.

VIDEO & AUDIO OF TERRORISTS, HOSTAGES OR PRISONERS

Statements from, interviews with, or video of terrorists, hostages or prisoners of war should be judged on their journalistic merits before making a decision on usage.

Some guidelines for making those decisions:

- **TERRORISTS**
  - Although we will report on the actions of terrorists, **VOA SHOULD NOT BE USED AS A PLATFORM TO SPREAD THEIR MESSAGES.**
  - This means that in almost all cases, VOA will not air a terrorist message in its entirety. Senior VOA managers will decide what portions, if any, of the message will be cleared for broadcast and websites based upon its news value.

- **HOSTAGES/PRISONERS**
  - Pay close attention to whether a hostage or prisoner appears to have been mistreated, is bound in handcuffs or shackles, or has a hood on his/her head.
  - In the case of a prisoner's statement, VOA will take special measures to ensure that the individual POW identities are not revealed (i.e. facial blurring, voice alteration, use of pseudonym or nom du guerre).
  - Senior VOA managers will decide whether to show video of this nature.

- **FULL DISCLOSURE**
  - When applicable, all TV and radio scripts and web copy **MUST** state that VOA has not been able to independently verify the source of the video or audio. Should VOA receive the material directly from a group, army or government, that should be noted in the script and web copy as well.

- **LEGAL ISSUES**
  - From the Office of General Counsel: The Geneva Convention relative to Treatment of Prisoners of War requires POWs to "at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity." Although the Convention does not define what "public curiosity" means, the U.S. is a party to the Convention and it generally applies it at all times to the maximum extent practicable.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THESE ARE BASIC GUIDELINES.
EACH INSTANCE IS UNIQUE, AND A DECISION IN ONE SITUATION WILL NOT NECESSARILY BE THE PROPER ACTION FOR THE NEXT SITUATION.
ALWAYS CONSULT WITH VOA SENIOR MANAGERS BEFORE MAKING ANY DECISIONS TO AIR OR PUBLISH MATERIAL OF THIS NATURE.

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THREATS TO JOURNALISTS

VOA journalists sometimes operate in dangerous environments. Hostile governments, terrorist groups, and lone actors occasionally threaten the safety of our employees and stringers. Their safety is paramount.

REPORTING THREATS

If any person operating on behalf of VOA believes his or her safety to be under threat, it should immediately be reported to the proper authorities at VOA. Such incidents include detention, harassment, or credible threats of harm.

If an incident occurs, the reporter must inform their supervisor/editor who will contact their service chief and division director. Those managers will then alert Security and VOA Programming.

As part of the reporting requirements, service chiefs should receive verbal or written confirmation that the person affected consents for a record of the incident to be created for internal use. Information about these incidents will be securely stored on USAGM systems, with access limited to a small number of individuals.

EXTERNAL RELEASE OF THIS INFORMATION

Any release of this information will require the clear written consent of the journalist involved, as well as clearance by the VOA director. Even a release of the individual's name to the USAGM board requires clearance with the VOA Programming Office. Any other release of information pertaining to these incidents must be used solely to assist the affected individual or to work with organizations that further journalistic freedom.

COVERING MASS SHOOTINGS

The Poynter Institute provides excellent guidance on how to cover and report on mass shootings. These are their primary recommendations:

- Name the shooter infrequently, if at all, and only when his or her name is critical to helping your audience understand what happened.

- Avoid images of the shooter that could be seen as glorifying him or her by others who might be inclined to other acts of violence.

- As more information becomes available, be careful to be accurate and contextual. Small details can take on inappropriate levels of importance in the early reporting stages. Those details can be harmful to the truth if they are inaccurate or out of context.

- Avoid speculating about mental illness or allowing unqualified sources to speculate about mental illness. Witnesses, law enforcement and politicians usually know very little about the topic in general, are likely to know even less about the role of mental illness in this tragedy.

- Avoid using superlatives like "the deadliest mass shooting ever," in teases, tweets and other formats where context is absent. Instead, use them where you can bring more context, such as interviews, the text of stories and produced packages.

This link from SAVE.org includes additional recommendations and other important guidelines for covering and reporting on mass shootings.

COVERING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

VOA staff **must not** interfere in any way with ongoing law enforcement activities. If some orders seem designed to manage or deny news coverage, VOA reporters, producers and photographers at the scene should protest and notify senior management and the Office of General Counsel as quickly as possible. If necessary, the agency will take appropriate legal action to protect access to the news.

There may be occasions where VOA staff has the opportunity to accompany law enforcement on arrests or investigations. These situations can present sensitive legal questions, including trespass and invasion of privacy.

THESE ACTIVITIES SHOULD ONLY BE UNDERTAKEN WITH APPROVAL IN ADVANCE FROM YOUR SUPERVISOR, VOA SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL.

It's important to understand that even though law enforcement may go onto private property, it **DOES NOT** mean that journalists are exempt from trespassing.
(Also see Filming In Public vs. Private Places, p. 103)

Keep in mind that cameras, microphones and lights can cause relatively passive bystanders to act and/or react for the cameras. All VOA staff should use their own best judgment and discretion in these situations; where possible, you should avoid any action that could possibly influence the event.

At the same time, VOA staff covering conflicts, protests or demonstrations should not take one side or another.
(Also see Fairness, Objectivity and Balance, p. 8 and Social Media, p. 49)

Neither the police nor demonstration leaders should be a reporter's only sources for accurate reporting of causes, issues or casualties.

HOSTAGE/BARRICADE SITUATIONS

Coverage of these situations, whether in the U.S. or overseas, presents difficult challenges and usually requires special care. No single statement or guideline can begin to cover every situation that we may report on. The following are intended to guide you in exercising your best judgment.

- The event should be characterized as accurately as possible. Before labeling an event a "riot" or "terrorism," or referring to someone as a "terrorist," you should discuss it with your senior editors and managers, and if necessary, with News Center managers or the Editor for News Standards and Best Practices.

- Keep in mind the possibility that a hostage taker may be able to see, hear, or try to manipulate VOA's coverage. Consider whether describing or showing the actions or movements of law enforcement officers could tip off the hostage taker or barricaded person.

- **DO NOT** put yourself in a position where you could be playing a role in the incident. VOA staff should **NEVER** attempt to contact a hostage or hostage taker. This could endanger a hostage and interfere with rescue efforts. It could also possibly subject you to criminal liability. You should not attempt to make or receive telephone calls from a hostage or barricade situation or from nearby homes or businesses.

- When reporting on these situations, avoid speculation about the hostage taker, his or her motives, demands, or state of mind. If a guest speculates about these issues, the host should point out that VOA has not verified what the guest has just said, and move the conversation away from such speculation.

NAMING PEOPLE INVOLVED IN CRIMES

Be precise with the language used in reporting about crime or demonstrations.

VICTIMS

VOA should not name rape victims or other victims of sexual assaults or molestations. These crimes carry a stigma for the victims, and victims should be allowed to decide whether they want to be identified. Be cautious in providing descriptive details so that the person is not inadvertently identified.

There are special difficulties in identifying minors (under 18 years of age) who have been kidnapped or are alleged victims of sexual crimes. In the case of a kidnapping, news outlets may identify minors to help them be found. However, if we learn that a kidnapped minor has been sexually assaulted, the responsible action is to stop both naming the individual and showing his/her picture.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE ABOVE MUST BE APPROVED IN ADVANCE BY A SUPERVISOR AND THE EDITOR FOR NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES

SUSPECTS

VOA does not identify suspects of criminal investigations who have not been charged or arrested. This has become more difficult in the U.S. in recent years, when law enforcement officials refer to someone as "a person of interest." This is not a legal term, and VOA should not use it because it can place a person under increasing suspicion and may result in unintended consequences for the individual.

The essential source for identifying the status of a person or group charged or arrested is law enforcement or the court system, **NOT** an unidentified "informed individual." When someone has been charged with a crime, use language that does not imply guilt or innocence. Similarly, if someone originally identified as a suspect is not charged with a crime, we must make that known as soon as possible in a follow-up story.

NAMING OR IDENTIFYING MINORS INVOLVED IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

In addition to the guidance above regarding minors who are victims, VOA should not name, show video or play audio of a minor who is a suspect in a crime, or is arrested and charged with a crime. Exceptions may be made if a minor is charged as an adult, but in those cases we should wait until the accused has been formally charged, not just arrested.

There may be other exceptions, such as if a minor is charged with murder or another heinous crime. In some cases, local media may have already widely reported the minor's identity.

BEFORE DECIDING TO IDENTIFY A MINOR, PLEASE CONSULT
A SUPERVISOR AND THE EDITOR FOR NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES

INTERVIEWING & VIDEOTAPING MINORS

Interviewing minors, whether for audio or video, can present special issues, particularly where wrongdoing, criminal activity, private, potentially embarrassing or other sensitive situations are involved. In these situations you **MUST** obtain permission from a parent or adult guardian. Permission should be in writing, where possible. You can find the release form on Sharepoint.
If that isn't possible, recording audio or video of the parent/guardian giving consent is acceptable.

Generally, minors can be interviewed and recorded, without permission, on non-controversial subjects such as reaction to a movie, talking about a favorite food, going back to school on the first day of the school year.

When recording audio or shooting video at a school in the U.S., ask whether a school has sent out what are known as "negative releases" to parents. These are notifications that a media crew will be visiting a school, asking parents to return the notice only if they **DO NOT** want their child to participate in interviews or tapings. In this situation you may not need additional permission.

In a breaking news situation, if the minor is out of harm's way, it may be permissible – without parental approval -- to interview the minor if he/she is a witness or has information about the event. However, keep in mind that the minor must be freely willing to talk, and should not be asked private, personal or other potentially embarrassing questions and should not be asked to name suspects.

In all cases, ABC NewsOne, AFP, AP and Reuters video should be carefully screened to follow the same guidelines.

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COVERING & REPORTING SUICIDES

Deciding whether to report the name of a suicide victim is a delicate and difficult matter. Did the victim commit suicide publicly in order to achieve notoriety? Will reporting the person's name encourage others who might be contemplating suicide and looking for recognition? Will reporting the victim's name bring unwanted attention to family or friends? Keep in mind that by most accounts, people who commit suicide are in a disturbed or distressed mental state. Consequently, there are no clear or easy answers to these questions.

If the person is **NOT** a public figure, there should be no overwhelming editorial reason to report the name. Ask the question: Is the suicide tangential to the story, or does it have a larger impact on the story or participants in the story?

BEFORE REPORTING THE NAME OF A SUICIDE VICTIM, PLEASE CONSULT A SUPERVISOR OR THE EDITOR FOR NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES

There may be a situation when a VOA staffer in the field is in a position to intervene in a situation where injury or the loss of life is a very real outcome. When a person decides to take his or her own life as a protest, there is no expectation that a journalist will intervene, nor is there a VOA policy on whether you should or should not intervene. It is up to the individual on the scene to use his or her own best judgment.
(Also see Sensitive & Graphic Material, p. 30)

BREAKING NEWS

Although breaking news situations don't often present themselves in VOA's daily coverage, there are certain key points to follow when putting that type of information on the air or online.

Producers should use caution before airing live and/or unedited material which may be excessively graphic in visuals or language. Ask the question: Does the news value of the material warrant airing it without reviewing it first?

CONSULT WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR AND THE EDITOR FOR NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES IF POTENTIALLY GRAPHIC MATERIAL IS GOING TO BE AIRED OR POSTED ONLINE BEFORE BEING VIEWED OR WITHOUT A DETAILED DESCRIPTION.

When airing or posting such material, alert your listeners, viewers and readers as to the nature of the material.
(Also see Sensitive & Graphic Material, p. 30)

REPORTING CROWD ESTIMATES

When covering rallies or demonstrations, it's important to attribute estimates of size. Organizing groups or official agencies which provide them may have reasons to inflate or downplay the numbers.

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Where non-official estimates such as "hundreds of thousands" appear to be guesses or inflated, a correspondent, producer or photographer on the scene may be able to provide a better perspective on crowd size.

As an example, they can say the crowd is standing shoulder to shoulder for four blocks. If a correspondent, producer or photographer is not covering the event, we should look to the wire services for their reporting on the size of the crowd.
(Also see Attribution, p. 16)

STAGING & RE-CREATIONS

- **VOA DOES NOT DO "AS LIVE," "LOOK LIVE" OR "LIVE TO TAPE" VIDEO REPORTS.**

These are video playbacks of a correspondent reporting from a location, but are manipulated in the control room to give the illusion that this is a true live shot by placing the video in a double box and having the anchor appear to interact with the correspondent. Presenting a correspondent in this manner goes against the VOA Charter's principle of being a reliable and credible source of news, and should be discouraged at all times.

- **VOA REPORTS THE NEWS**
- **WE DO NOT CREATE OR MANIPULATE NEWS STORIES**
- **STAGING A NEWS EVENT OR CONTROLLING HOW IT TURNS OUT -- WHETHER BY ENCOURAGEMENT, PROPS OR PAYMENT -- IS UNACCEPTABLE**

When shooting video with the subject of a story to explain something that happened, don't ask the person to do things they normally don't do. For instance: It's acceptable to shoot video of a family that goes to the cemetery once a week to place flowers on the grave of a family member, but you should explain in the track that this is something the family normally does. However, if you ask someone to go to the cemetery and lay flowers on the grave of a family member, you should explain that as well.

Keep in mind, though, that the more you direct people – having them do things specifically for the camera – the more time you'll have to spend explaining that to the audience.

USING VOA EMPLOYEES OR RELATIVES FOR STORIES

Generally speaking, VOA employees should not be used in radio, TV or web pieces outside of their official capacity. In most cases it is also preferable not to use the relatives or friends of VOA employees. While they may be perfect subjects to help illustrate stories, there is always the possibility of the appearance of a conflict.

However exceptions can be granted. For instance, if a relative or friend is prominent or expert in his or her own right. When in doubt, consult with your supervisor or the Editor for News Standards & Best Practices.

INTERVIEWS

Even in the era of selfies, photo-bombing and user-generated content, most people are not comfortable being interviewed and consider recording equipment to be invasive, especially when you're dealing with sensitive subjects. One way to reduce that unease or tension is to first talk to an interview subject **WITHOUT** the equipment. Put the person at ease; make him or her feel comfortable talking to you before proceeding with the actual interview.

When setting up an interview, the subject may ask what questions will be asked or how the interview will be treated when produced. It's OK to outline in advance general points of interest and the general subject areas you intend to cover.

YOU SHOULD NOT

- **PROVIDE ACTUAL QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED**
- **PROMISE YOU WILL NOT ASK QUESTIONS OUTSIDE THE AREAS YOU HAVE OUTLINED**
- **PROMISE HOW SUBJECTS WILL BE TREATED ON THE AIR**

Any agreement that certain questions will or will not be asked will be decided on a case-by-case basis in consultation with your supervisor and/or VOA senior management as warranted. If an agreement is approved, the agreement should be mentioned in the introduction to the interview.

If an interviewee requires VOA to use a name or title we ordinarily would not use, that too should be mentioned in the introduction to the interview.

DO NOT PROMISE THAT

- **VOA WILL AIR THE ENTIRE INTERVIEW OR A PORTION OF IT IN A TV PROGRAM, OR AS PART OF A TV PACKAGE**
- **THAT THE INTERVIEWEE WILL BE ABLE TO FIND ALL OR PART OF THE INTERVIEW ON THE VOA WEBSITE**
- **THAT ANY PART OF THE INTERVIEW WILL BE INCLUDED IN A TV PROGRAM OR TV PACKAGE, OR WITH A WEB STORY OR BLOG**

(Also see Hosting a Guest on VOA Programs, p. 47)

NEWSMAKER INTERVIEWS

When VOA interviews a prominent newsmaker at length, the purpose is to find out what an individual, organization or group of lawmakers are thinking about a particular issue. This type of interview does not always require that the other side be presented within the interview format.

Instead, a video piece or a brief explainer can be used to set up the topic or topics being discussed, and that can be the means by which the other side's point of view is presented. Another possibility is reading copy following the interview stating the opposition's view.

Ultimately, it is advisable to seek out a corresponding interview at length with someone from the other side of the issue.

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RECORDING TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

- If you are planning to record a telephone interview, the reporter or producer **MUST** advise the interview subject that he or she is being recorded, and that their comments will be on the record. If the interview subject objects to being recorded, the reporter or producer should confirm that the interview can be used as off the record information.
  (Also see Sourcing, p. 14 and Defamation/Privacy/False Light, p. 103)

SHOOTING/EDITING TV INTERVIEWS

- When shooting a two-camera interview, it's acceptable for a reporter to register appropriate visual expressions, such as smiling at a joke. What is NOT acceptable is editing in a visual reaction that is out of sequence to the answer being given.

- Equally unacceptable is separating questions from answers. The 10th answer of an interview **should not** be edited as if it were the response to the 4th question, even if it seems to make the reporter's or producer's editorial point clearer.

- Interviews shot with one camera can present editing difficulties, so when possible, the camera should be set up to start the interview on a medium 2-shot. That will allow the cameraperson to push in on the interview subject, pan to the interviewer and pull back to the 2-shot as needed.

- If the above method isn't possible, then reverse questions (questions asked after the interview is done, with the camera reversed to tape the interviewer), while not ideal, are allowed. Reverse questions should be true to the original questions and if done, the interviewee or representative should be made aware and should be invited to be present.

  In this situation, because the reverse shots are happening after the actual interview, the reporter or producer should avoid showing an expression (smile, frown, nod) that might be seen as agreement or disagreement with what the subject said during the interview.

PUBLIC FIGURES

Questions and reporting about the private lives of public figures should be relevant to the story. For example, the questioning is appropriate when the reporting is intended to expose inconsistency, lying, hypocrisy and most certainly, illegal activity. In the case of candidates for public office, information about these actions often enables voters to judge the character of a candidate or elected official.

However, VOA's reporting **should not** be based on rumor, speculation or gossip. Reporting should rely on on the record statements and actions of public figures. Information from normally reliable sources not willing to be identified should be very closely examined.
(Also see Sourcing, p. 14 and Rumors & Speculation, p. 15)

The passage of time is an important consideration in determining what is relevant, and may affect current relevance. When information is dated, evaluate it carefully. In the case of a political figure, it may be the importance of such information for the public to judge that person's qualifications and fitness to hold public office.
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Consider each situation separately and own its own merits. There is no blanket rule prohibiting reporting private activities from many years ago.

For interviews, be very careful when using information from sources and/or sourced information from another news organization when asking a question to a guest about his/her private life.
(Also see Sourcing, p. 14 and Attribution, p. 16)

Open-ended questions based on little or no evidence are strongly discouraged. For example, the question "Have you ever taken a bribe," should not be asked unless it's based on our reporting, or if there is a compelling and journalistically justifiable reason to ask it.

IF VOA STAFF ARE UNSURE OF THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THEIR QUESTIONING OR REPORTING REGARDING THE PRIVATE LIFE OF A PUBLIC FIGURE, THEY SHOULD CONSULT WITH THEIR SUPERVISOR AND WHEN APPROPRIATE WITH THE EDITOR FOR NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES AND THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL.

ANONYMITY

There may be reasons to agree to anonymity for an interview subject, whether for radio, TV or online. For example, we may not wish to jeopardize the subject's safety or subject him or her or family members to harm or undue embarrassment. But there may be legal considerations as well in granting anonymity to interview subjects.

Always ask the interviewee about his or her reasons for requesting anonymity. Clarify and confirm the conditions agreed to in exchange for the information. Anonymity for interviewees can be defined by degree. In establishing the degree of anonymity, describe the process to be used (e.g. blurring of faces, digitizing the voice, videotaping in shadow) but do not guarantee a particular result.

- **THE FAILURE TO ADEQUATELY DISGUISE AN INTERVIEW SUBJECT OR A MISUNDERSTANDING OVER THE STEPS AGREED ON TO DISGUISE AN INTERVIEW SUBJECT CAN RESULT IN A LEGAL CLAIM AGAINST VOA.**

- **GENERALLY, WE WANT TO AVOID PROMISING ANONYMITY FOR PEOPLE TRYING TO EVADE LAW ENFORCEMENT.**

- **EXCEPTIONS SHOULD BE CLEARED WITH A SUPERVISOR, THE EDITOR FOR NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES AND/OR SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL.**
  (Also see Sourcing, p. 14)

"AMBUSH" INTERVIEWS

So-called "ambush" interviews, where a person who has refused to be interviewed is approached without notice by a reporter or producer, are discouraged and should be avoided. An "ambush" is different than a "stakeout," where cameras are set up in advance to get comments from individuals who are going to or leaving meetings and/or work.

CONSULT WITH SUPERVISORS, THE EDITOR FOR NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES AND/OR SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL WHEN CONSIDERING WHETHER TO DO AN AMBUSH INTERVIEW.

ADVANCE SCRIPTS/SCREENING

You should not show a script to a third party not affiliated with VOA or USAGM in advance of the story's broadcast or online publication. However, you can call an interviewee and review portions of a script in order to fact check. As part of the reporting process you may also show portions of other interviews or other footage prepared for the report to an interview subject to obtain their reaction or comment for use in the same report. You should videotape the individual watching the other interview or other footage whenever possible.

Advance screenings of VOA news stories are not permitted without the prior approval of senior management. An exception: press screenings for review purposes.

SUBJECT TAPING INTERVIEW

On occasion, a subject may ask to do his or her own recording of an interview. That is permissible as long as the subject understands the taping is for personal use only, not for broadcast, publication or other distribution. As noted above, VOA will not provide an audio or video copy of the raw interview to an interview subject.

REQUESTS FOR UNAIRED/UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

As a general policy, **VOA should not give third parties access to unaired or unpublished material** or discuss the existence of such materials. Refer those requests to senior management and the Office of General Counsel.
(Also see Usage Requests, p. 93 and VOA Firewall, p. 99)

PAYMENT

VOA does not pay people for interviews. However, it may be appropriate to pay certain travel-related expenses for an interviewee. Refer questions on this subject to VOA senior management and the Office of General Counsel.

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GUESTS

NOTIFYING VOA SENIOR MANAGEMENT OF HIGH-LEVEL GUESTS

As a major international broadcaster, VOA often welcomes to the Cohen Building high-level foreign government officials and other important individuals, such as prominent dissidents and exiles. To better determine when additional protocols may be appropriate, VOA journalists who schedule these meetings or visits should immediately notify senior management through their chain of command. Division Directors will then notify the Programming Directorate for coordination with the VOA Director's Office. Decisions about any special actions that may be needed will be coordinated between the VOA Director's Office and the CEO's Office. Notification at each stage should occur prior to the visit, with sufficient time for senior management to take any actions that may be necessary.

VOA personnel who schedule meetings at the Cohen Building with audience members, members of the diaspora, or lower-level government officials should also immediately notify their Division Director. That Division Director will then decide whether additional coordination within VOA and/or the CEO's Office is required.

SECURITY PROCEDURES FOR GUESTS

Security procedures for entry into the Cohen Building are set by the Federal Protective Service (FPS), the agency that provides integrated security and law enforcement services to federally owned and leased facilities. FPS, not USAGM Security, manages the contract for the building's Protective Security Officers (PSOs), thus they report to and are represented by the FPS Inspector.

As with other Federal buildings, all visitors must show proper photo ID and go through security screening upon arrival.

FOR PROGRAM GUESTS, THIS PROCESS CAN SEEM CUMBERSOME. CONSEQUENTLY, EMPLOYEES MUST EXPLAIN THE SECURITY PROCEDURES AND PHOTO ID REQUIREMENTS TO ALL PROGRAM GUESTS PRIOR TO THEIR ARRIVAL, AND ASK THAT THEY ANTICIPATE ABOUT 10 MINUTES FOR THE CHECK-IN PROCESS.

Types of Accepted Identification:

1. U.S. Citizens: Valid U.S. Driver's License or U.S. Passport
2. Non-U.S. Citizens: Valid Passport/Visa

Please notify your guest/visitor that they will be required to process through security screening (walk-through magnetometer and x-ray machine for hand-carried items) prior to arrival.
(Also see Prohibited Items, p. 112)

If you are sponsoring an event, please provide USAGM Security with a guest list that includes the date/time of their arrival, along with their full names and your contact information (Sponsor). Please remember that all visitors **MUST** be escorted while in the Cohen Building per FPS requirements. This list should be emailed to the central Security email at: usagm-security@usagm.gov.
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In those rare cases when an important guest arrives without ID, contact USAGM Security immediately so they can work with the FPS to request an exception to normal procedures and allow the guest entry into the building. Please understand that the final decision to waive normal security procedures for your guest rests with FPS, not USAGM Security.

Exceptions to these procedures can be made in some cases for VIPs. VIPs are granted access without having to sign in or go through the metal detectors. Under some circumstances, they also enter the building through a different entry point than the C Street visitors' entrance.

The following are automatically considered VIPs:

1. The President and his cabinet, including sitting Ambassadors
2. Sitting and former members of Congress
3. Anyone who has a federal law enforcement detail, such as foreign dignitaries

For these and other special guests, employees can request VIP status from USAGM Security managers or from the USAGM Chief of Staff.

Please contact Security with any additional questions at 202-382-7777.

GUEST BOOKING PROCEDURES

- **ALL REQUESTS FOR THE PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, FIRST LADY AND THE VP's SPOUSE WILL BE MADE THROUGH THE VOA DIRECTOR'S OFFICE.**

THERE ARE ABSOLUTELY NO EXCEPTIONS

- **REQUESTS FOR OTHER WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS, CABINET SECRETARIES, CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THE KEY BEATS SHOULD COME FROM THE NEWS CENTER CORRESPONDENTS AT THOSE BEATS.**

THE CORRESPONDENTS ARE THE FACE OF VOA FOR THOSE BEATS AND WE CANNOT UNDERCUT THEIR POSITIONS

CONGRESS	Katherine Gypson
EDUCATION	Kathleen Struck
IMMIGRATION	Aline Barros
INTELLIGENCE/NATIONAL SECURITY	Jeff Seldin
JUSTICE	Masood Farivar
MEDICAL	Carol Pearson
PENTAGON	Carla Babb
STATE DEPARTMENT	Cindy Saine & Nike Ching
UNITED NATIONS	Margaret Besheer
WHITE HOUSE	Steve Herman & Patsy Widakuswara

These requests **SHOULD BE SENT FIRST** to the appropriate beat correspondent. When an interview has been confirmed, an e-mail should be sent to the Guest Booking group: guest-booking@voanews.com

- When we get an interview with the President, Vice President, First Lady, VP's spouse, key Cabinet secretaries or Congressional leadership, VOA Public Relations should be notified immediately: PublicRelations@voanews.com

ADDITIONALLY: LARRY LONDON'S BEAT IS MUSIC AND PENELOPE POULOU'S BEAT IS FILM.
If a Language Service is thinking of interviewing a major musician or musical group, or thinking of getting an interview with a film personality who is on a junket or making an appearance in a bureau city, **an advisory e-mail should go out first to Larry or Penelope accordingly, and to Guest Booking**.

By the same token, when Larry, Penelope or anyone else has a major music interview or movie-related interview scheduled, they should advise the Guest Booking e-mail group.

When there are major awards shows – usually in Los Angeles -- Mike O'Sullivan in the L.A. bureau should be brought into the conversation. As with State, Pentagon or elsewhere – it does not make VOA look good if a studio or a musician's or filmmaker's press person is hearing from multiple VOA individuals.

LANGUAGE SERVICES & NEWS CENTER GUIDELINES

Language Services and the News Center should use the "Guest Booking" email group for notifications about the following types of information:

- Guests they intend to book, whether newsmakers or experts.
  - Should a Language Service seek an expert on a topic but has not yet identified the expert, it would still be helpful for Guest Boking to be notified of the Service's interest in an expert on a specific topic.
  - Guests that have already been booked.
  - Unplanned interviews that were conducted in the course of newsgathering.
- Whenever possible, Language Services and the News Center should include whatever germane information is available in their guest booking notifications: details such as date and time if known, location of the interview, platform and device (Skype, smartphone, ENG camera, audio only), language, where content may be accessed, gist of interview, full log or transcript about what was said, if available.
- **The News Center will collect this information** and provide via email a several-times **daily calendar** that will track all known guest activity at-a-glance for all to see.
- This calendar will permanently reside in the shared drive for the whole how to easily access, thus serving as a back-up for the email distribution and providing an easily accessible archive of all guest activity.

When and where possible, stringers for the News Center and the Language Services should keep the field correspondents and/or Washington advised of potential interviews of interest.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ALL STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR BOOKING GUESTS/INTERVIEWS SEND A NOTE TO GUEST BOOKING AND TO THE APPROPRIATE INDIVIDUALS BEFORE MAKING A REQUEST.

HOSTING A GUEST ON VOA PROGRAMS

- **IT IS MANDATORY** that a discussion takes place at the Language Service and/or Division level when a service is considering a live interview with a potentially controversial or hostile guest, or about particularly sensitive issues.

- The discussion should focus on determining the format for that interview, and the final decision about the format will be determined at the Division level.

- An interview with a controversial guest or about sensitive issues **SHOULD NOT BE PROMOTED** until the final decision on the interview format has been made.

- It may be decided that the best approach will be to **RECORD** the interview so that it can be edited for time and presented to the audience in the best editorial and production formats possible.

- **All potential guests must be pre-interviewed** to get a sense of what to expect during the actual interview. You can discuss general topics, but do not give the guest the actual interview questions in advance. That pre-interview should be available for review by producers, anchors and Language Service or Division management.

- When you know you're going to have a controversial or potentially hostile live guest, prepare a game plan with the show staff and the show Director about what to do if the interview goes downhill, so that everyone in the control room and on the set know in advance what to do, including implementation of a back-up plan.

- It is the responsibility of a program's host to do his/her homework about the guest and the subject matter. If a guest starts making unsubstantiated accusations or questionable statements, it is the responsibility of the anchor to challenge the guest about those accusations/statements, whether asking for clarification about the source of the accusations/statements or refuting those accusations/statements with facts.

- If a guest uses language that is unsuitable for air (cursing, insulting, racial or homosexual slurs, for example) it is the responsibility of the host to immediately cut the conversation off and apologize to the audience for the offensive language. It is the responsibility of the Executive Producer to alert the Director about what has happened so the Director can make sure the guest's microphone is silenced. At that point the EP must communicate to the Director and the Line Producer to implement a back-up plan.

- The Executive Producer is responsible for a written report of the incident. Detail the unacceptable or irresponsible language used by the guest, how the anchor handled the situation and what steps were taken to end the interview and go to alternate programming. The report is to be sent to the Service Chief, Division Director, Associate Director for Language Programming and the Associate Director for Operations.

- Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Executive Producer to ensure that the program is clean and airs correctly. The anchor can only do so much. The EP has his/her finger on the button, so to speak, with the authority and ability to tell the Director and the Line Producer to go to something else. That's why you need to have a backup plan.

GOING TO BLACK DURING A LIVE INTERVIEW IS A LAST DITCH OPTION, WHEN NOTHING ELSE WORKS. IT IS NEVER THE FIRST OPTION.

(Also see Interviews, p. 39)

DIGITAL MEDIA

SOCIAL MEDIA – USAGM

All VOA staff and contractors should be aware of the USAGM's social media policy, which can be found on SharePoint: USAGM - Social Media Policy

SOCIAL MEDIA - VOA

Remember that on social media and other public spaces, you are a journalist. It is critical that you are fair, impartial and objective at all times.

If you take a controversial position or display personal bias, it will reflect poorly on you and on the Voice of America. It could lead our audience to believe that we are untrustworthy and that you are unable to fairly cover a controversial story. This not only includes individual remarks in social media, but also posting your political affiliation or causes in your social media profile. Privacy policies change and people can take screenshots**. Assume nothing is private in social media,** even if your account is visible only to your online circle of friends.

Even retweeting or "liking" an opinion on one side of the issue or another could be seen as an endorsement from you or from VOA. If you want to put that comment in front of your followers, make sure it is clear you aren't endorsing the opinion, but simply showing both sides of the conversation.

Don't be afraid to engage with either side of a controversial issue. It is okay to follow or friend individuals or interest groups on either side of an issue. In fact, it should be part of the reporting process; paying attention to what both sides have to say is critical to getting as much information as possible on an issue. But never endorse only one side or the other by "liking" a cause or political figure, and make sure you follow all sides of an issue.

While personal endeavors on other sites are fine, they must not involve the use of agency materials, time or facilities, including information that is available to you because of your position at VOA.

ALLEGATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MISUSE WILL BE FULLY INVESTIGATED, AND STAFFERS WILL BE NOTIFIED OF ANY SUCH ALLEGATIONS.

SOCIAL MEDIA MISUSE MAY RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION, UP TO AND INCLUDING REMOVAL FROM FEDERAL SERVICE

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PROTECTING YOUR PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL REPUTATION

If your account is hacked, or you find that an imposter account is impersonating you, your reputation and that of VOA can be damaged.

Your first line of defense is to maintain good online security practices.

- Monitor your digital identity by periodically conducting an online search for your name using several of the leading search engines, e.g. Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc. Examine the results on the first two or three pages to make sure there are no unfamiliar accounts.
- Use strong passwords, combining uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters
- Change passwords frequently
- Do not use the same passwords for multiple accounts
- Keep your passwords safe
- Make sure your email address is secure
- Be sure who you are actually connecting with or following; connect with Verified public profiles

The second option is to take images used for your profile picture and do a reverse image search, since impersonators will often use pictures you've posted online to create fake accounts. This primer from Google is a good place to start and will show you how to find all the places your pictures are showing up across the internet.

If you find or suspect problems with your accounts:

- Contact the Office of VOA Digital Strategy as soon as possible voadigital@voanews.com.
  They will work with the social media companies to help take care of hacks or imposter accounts.

To help prevent security problems, or once your account has been fixed, please follow these best practices for securing your account:

- Change your password
- Make sure your email address is secure
- Revoke connections to third-party applications
- Update your password in your trusted third-party applications

More details on these practices, and additional steps to protect your accounts:

- Twitter: https://support.twitter.com/articles/31796
- Facebook: Keeping Your Account Secure (part of the Facebook Help Center)

PEN America, the global group that ensures that people have the freedom to convey information and ideas, has created an Online Harassment Field Manual which may prove useful.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS REPORTING TOOL

- Reporters are encouraged to break news on social media platforms that are most popular in their region, but certain editorial priorities should be followed.

- **REPORTERS SHOULD QUICKLY FILE FOR VOA-OWNED PLATFORMS AFTER BREAKING NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA, PARTICULARLY FOR HIS OR HER SERVICE'S WEBSITE, BUT ALSO FOR RADIO AND TV WHEN APPROPRIATE.**

- **IF A VOA REPORTER/PRODUCER HAS A BREAKING STORY, HE OR SHE SHOULD BE THE ONE TO FIRST REPORT THAT ON THEIR OWN SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS OR ON THE SERVICE'S OFFICIAL ACCOUNT.**

It's also important to remember that social media is more than Facebook and Twitter. Niche audiences often have their own niche social networks. Get to know which ones are popular with your audience and experiment with them.

Reporting has always been about amplifying certain voices from the public. But rather than a list of carefully cultivated sources that reporters have traditionally relied upon, social media can present millions of competing voices that we must select from wisely. Whether you call it citizen journalism or social media, our readers often report and share news stories before we are able to verify the facts. While it's good to highlight those voices, it is critical to verify rumors before reporting them as facts.

There are techniques for confirming the validity of certain social media accounts, including examination of how long the account has been in existence, looking at the account's message history, and scrutiny of photo streams or other bits of the user's digital trail. If you have doubts, reach out to your service or division's social media lead for guidance. You must practice due diligence before relying on a source as credible. In other words, report the story.

Do not retweet or pass along unconfirmed rumors without a clear indication that the information is not yet verified.

ADDING COMMENTS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA TO YOUR REPORTING IS ACCEPTABLE AS LONG AS YOU CLEARLY IDENTIFY THE SOURCE OF THE COMMENT AND IT REFLECTS AUDIENCE OPINION, SIMILAR TO A VOX POP IN RADIO OR TELEVISION.

MAKE SURE YOU BALANCE OPINIONS TO PROVIDE A FAIR PICTURE OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT, AND CONTEXTUALIZE THOSE OPINIONS WITH THE LARGER STORY.
(Also see Fairness, Objectivity and Balance, p. 8)

MANAGING YOUR PROGRAM'S OR SERVICE'S SOCIAL PRESENCE

VOA programs and services are encouraged to maintain official accounts on the major social media platforms in your region. These platforms can help you engage with your current audience and reach new audiences with your content.

Before launching a new official social media presence, you and your Service Chief should answer the following questions:

- Who are you trying to reach and why is this the right way to reach them?
- Who is responsible for keeping each account active and how often?
- How will success be measured and who will track it?
- Does your branding align with the branding already established on your website?

You are also responsible for moderating the comments on your social platforms and your website to remove comments that violate our Terms of Use. In particular, you should be on the lookout for comments that are vulgar, racist or incite others to acts of violence. If you choose to respond to those comments, your replies should be professional and courteous. If the commenter continues to respond in a hostile manner you can block the user from commenting. **DO NOT** engage in a debate with anyone who is trying to stir up anger and violence. Be aware that our automated filters sometimes fail; always be vigilant about shaping a lively and responsible conversation by removing comments that distract from the free and civil exchange of ideas.

POSTING VOA CONTENT TO OTHER SITES, INCLUDING YOUR OWN

Uploading proprietary VOA or wire agency material directly to personal accounts is prohibited. Not only can you be held legally liable for posting photos or video that belongs to wire and newsfeed agencies, but you will hurt your service's ability to build an audience on official channels.

Instead, you should link to VOA material posted on your service's website or other official VOA accounts, like your service's official Facebook page or YouTube channel.

Example: A video editor in a VOA language service regularly combines wire service video and VOA video into packages for broadcast and web. He sometimes takes interesting video from AP, as well as video he has shot, and uploads it directly to his personal YouTube channel and Facebook page. Is that permitted?
Answer: **NO.** Employees should only upload VOA material to official VOA YouTube accounts. Once it's there, they can share to it from a personal YouTube account, Facebook or other channels.

Example: A reporter embeds video from her service's VOA YouTube channel on her own YouTube page and shares VOA reporting with her friends on Facebook. Is this permitted?
Answer: **YES.** Any material shared from your service's official, public-facing website, YouTube channel, or other official outlets is okay.

LINKING TO OTHER SITES

You are encouraged to provide links that are relevant to story content and suitable for all audiences. Editors should exercise judgment and not use links that may be offensive, or in any way, inappropriate.

Linking does not constitute endorsement. While you should avoid pointing readers to anything that is an affront to common decency, you can link to the websites of institutions or causes if they are relevant to a story. If your link is to the site of a particular candidate or party please be even-handed: if you link to the website of one political party, you should be just as willing to link to the website of the opposition party, when relevant to the story. Failure to do so could not only call into question our objectivity; it could be a violation of the Hatch Act.
(Also see Political Activity, p. 11)

BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT YOUR MISTAKES

Every news outlet makes mistakes. When a piece of reporting contains a factual error it should be corrected as quickly as possible. Talk to a senior editor in your service about what needs to be changed and place a correction at the bottom of the story in italics that notes the original error.

Never delete a story or video from your website without correcting and acknowledging the mistake. Not only will the incorrect story remain in the caches of major search engines, but your readers will believe that you are trying to cover something up instead of being honest and open. Full disclosure is always best.

While you should not delete incorrect stories or video from your site, you should use the content management system to remove it from major section fronts until it is corrected. The URL will continue to work, but will not be highlighted on the site.
(Also see Corrections, p. 97)

USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Like all news organizations, VOA receives video, audio and photos from outside sources. The content may be sent for the purpose of showing an up-close look at a news event; to present a particular point of view; to cast a negative light on a government, an organization or individuals.

In all cases, VOA journalists must take every editorial precaution to ensure the legitimacy of the submissions before broadcasting them or publishing them:

- **CONTACT & IDENTIFICATION**
  Reach out to individuals or groups who have posted material to verify that they are the owner of the work. Clearly identify yourself as a journalist when making inquiries about user-generated content.

- **NEWSWORTHINESS**
  Is there a valid editorial reason to use video, audio or photos that we receive from an outside source? Does the user-generated content help to further inform our audience about an issue or incident?

- **MOTIVE**
  Does the individual or group sending the material have an agenda? If VOA determines the content is agenda-driven and decides to air/publish the content, we should reveal why the material was submitted, and who submitted it.

- **REAL OR STAGED**
  Can VOA confirm that the video, audio or photo is real? Or, can VOA determine whether the content is fake or staged, produced in the hope that VOA might air or publish it?

- **COPYCAT INCIDENTS**
  Will the broadcasting or publication of the video/photos encourage others to create or produce similar content that in some cases could be life-threatening?

- **RIGHT TO PRIVACY**
  Was the material recorded or photographed without the knowledge of the individuals involved? In other words, was the material recorded with a hidden camera or microphone?

- **HOW WILL THE CONTENT BE USED**
  Should VOA receive sensitive or graphic content, follow the guidelines in the section on *Sensitive & Graphic Material, p. 30.* In some cases it may be more appropriate for such material to be posted online only, where users can choose what they do or do not want to see or hear.

- **PERMISSION**
  Once it's established the content is valid and its owner is identified, ask for permission to use the material. As always, VOA gives credit where credit is due, so the person who created the content should be identified accordingly; it is up to the individual or group whether to use real names or a website/social network username.

- **PAYING FOR MATERIAL**
  Other than our existing agreements with the news agencies and our freelancers, VOA does not pay for content. Please keep this in mind when dealing with user-generated content.
  (Also see Payment, p. 42)

- **DISCLAIMERS**
  We must always tell our audiences when we are airing or publishing user-generated content. In addition, we should tell our audiences that while we have checked for the legitimacy of the material, we cannot absolutely verify the content. As with all of VOA's reporting, transparency is key.

Follow this link to a useful at-your-desk tool for verifying user-generated content.
It provides various case studies that can easily be applied to potential UGC situations at VOA.

If you are uncertain about using photos or video taken from social media, please see the guidance on copyright and fair use in the *Legal Issues* section of this Guide, or e-mail the Office of General Counsel at copyrightclearances@usagm.gov.

UGC VETTING TEAMS

- **REGIONAL EXPERT –** VOA's vetting of UGC begins with the language skills and regional knowledge of our language service staff. Ideally these are the people locating new user-generated content and providing the first layer of vetting by authenticating regional dialects, recognizing landmarks and applying their specialized experience and knowledge.

- **TECHNICAL EXPERT –** Someone who is familiar with the tools, techniques and resources for detecting digital manipulation such as deep fakes. These are the tools VOA teams have successfully used:

  Adobe After Effects: Can check, pixel by pixel, whether content has been manipulated
  Amber Video: This app authenticates video content within a few minutes, but users must buy credits to use its services
  Adobe Photoshop: Can be used to check photo metadata as well as whether the photo has been edited
  Wondershare Video Convert: This tool is used to convert low quality and phone videos into usable videos with acceptable quality
  Adobe Premiere: Enhances the quality of videos and can manipulate brightness, contrast and other attributes

- **EDITORIAL EXPERT –** A VOA journalist who is an expert in VOA's editorial standards provides a final layer of vetting for authenticated content before it is broadcast or published. These should be language service chiefs or senior News Center editors. They work closely with the UGC team, reviewing every video with the regional and technical experts. The editorial expert not only vets the content, but also ensures that VOA news copy properly describes the content according to VOA sourcing guidelines (see next section). The editorial expert ultimately bears responsibility for deciding whether UGC is appropriate for use by VOA.

DESCRIBING UGC IN NEWS COPY

After any user generated content is approving for broadcast/publishing, it must be clearly identified in news copy. Accurate descriptions of UGC are critical to maintain VOA's credibility and transparency with our audiences. Examples of these descriptions:

"VOA could not independently verify the authenticity of the video/photo."
"In a video circulating on social media, which has not been independently verified by VOA…"

For video used in TV packages, chyrons should clearly identify UGC:
"Video via Iranian social media"
"Cell phone video from human rights activists in Thailand"

When necessary, should identify the source of the content – **WITHOUT** jeopardizing individuals or the methods used to distribute the video:

"Videos sent to VOA via secure messaging apps…"
"In videos circulated on Chinese social media platforms…"
"Videos of the incident shared with local journalists in Peshawar showed…"

The AP Stylebook offers useful tips on verifying user-generated content:
https://apstylebook.com/ap_stylebook/user-generated-content

If you are uncertain about using photos or video taken from social media, please see the guidance on copyright and fair use in the *Legal Issues* section of this Guide, or e-mail the Office of General Counsel at copyrightclearances@usagm.gov.

AUDIO, VIDEO OR PHOTOS THAT ARE OPENLY AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET DOES NOT MEAN THEY ARE IN THE "PUBLIC DOMAIN" OR "FREE TO USE"

YOUTUBE GUIDELINES

- **YOUTUBE VIDEOS ARE NOT A PRIMARY MEANS OF ACCESSING AND USING B-ROLL FOR A VIDEO PACKAGE. ALWAYS CHECK THE ABC NEWSONE, AFP, APTN AND REUTERS FOLDERS IN DALETPLUS AND THEIR ONLINE SITES FIRST. IF NECESSARY, CONTACT THE SENIOR ARCHIVISTS (SENIOR-ARCHIVISTS@VOANEWS.COM) FOR ASSISTANCE.**

- **THE VOA VIDEO LIBRARY (VIDEO-LIBRARY@VOANEWS.COM) HAS EXTENSIVE FILE VIDEO AVAILABLE; ALWAYS CHECK THERE BEFORE RELYING ON YOUTUBE FOR FILE VIDEO NEEDS.**

- **USE CAUTION AND COMMON SENSE AND AVOID USING VIDEOS FROM YOUTUBE THAT MAY VIOLATE SOMEONE'S COPYRIGHT. WHEN IN DOUBT, PLEASE CONTACT THE EDITOR FOR NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES FOR GUIDANCE.**

Although YouTube is the most popular site for video, similar rules apply to other sites, such as Vimeo and VEVO.

Use of YouTube videos should be cleared through the Editor for News Standards & Best Practices. The video can be used full-screen as long as credits, chyron information and other on-screen information is not obscured or deleted.

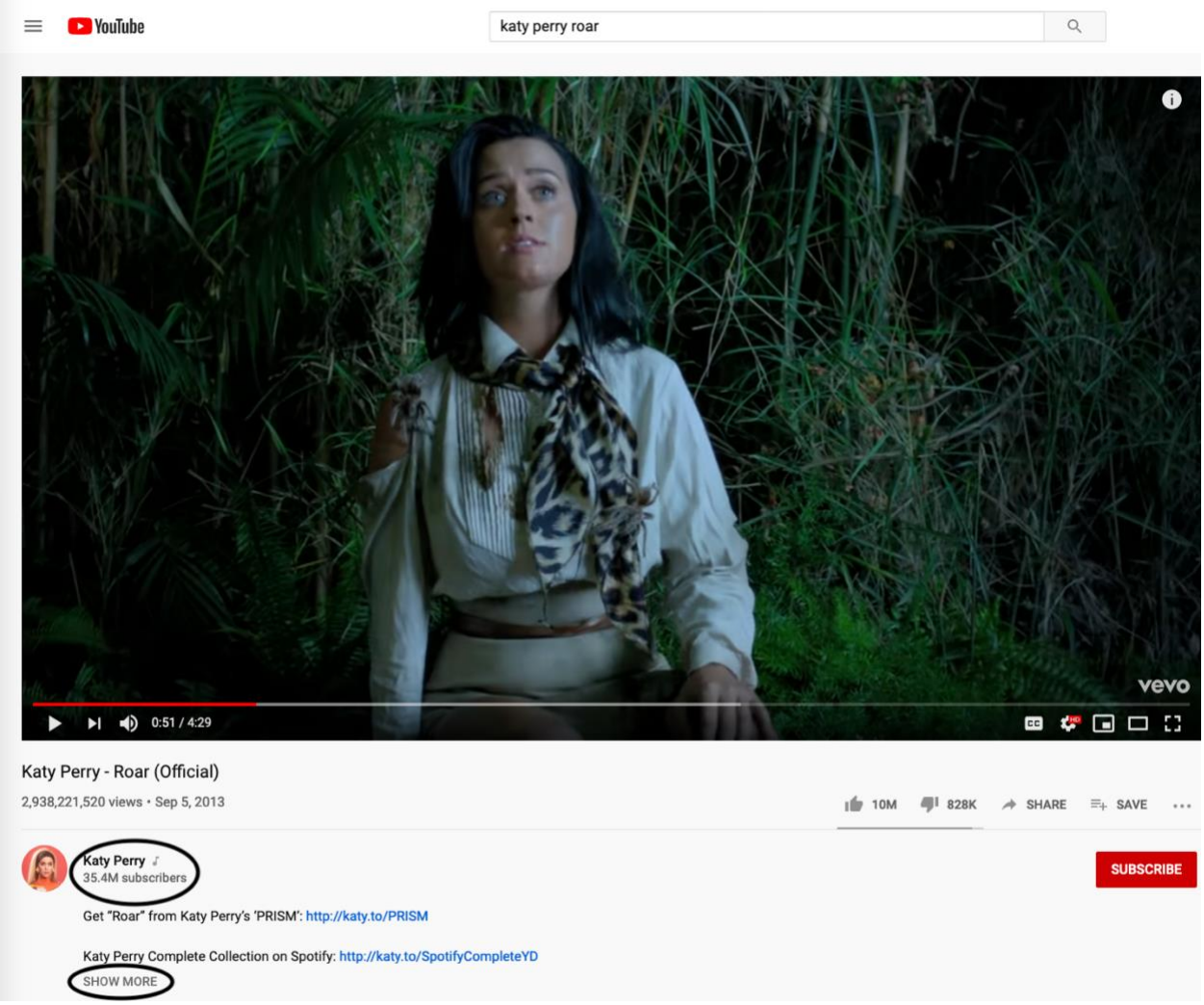
The actual YouTube logo **MUST** be burned into the video and remain on-screen throughout the clip:

YouTube has a blurring tool that lets you blur any part of a video, including moving objects. This link takes you to the tool.
(Also see Sensitive & Graphic Material, p. 30)

CREDITS FOR MUSIC VIDEOS & MOVIE CLIPS

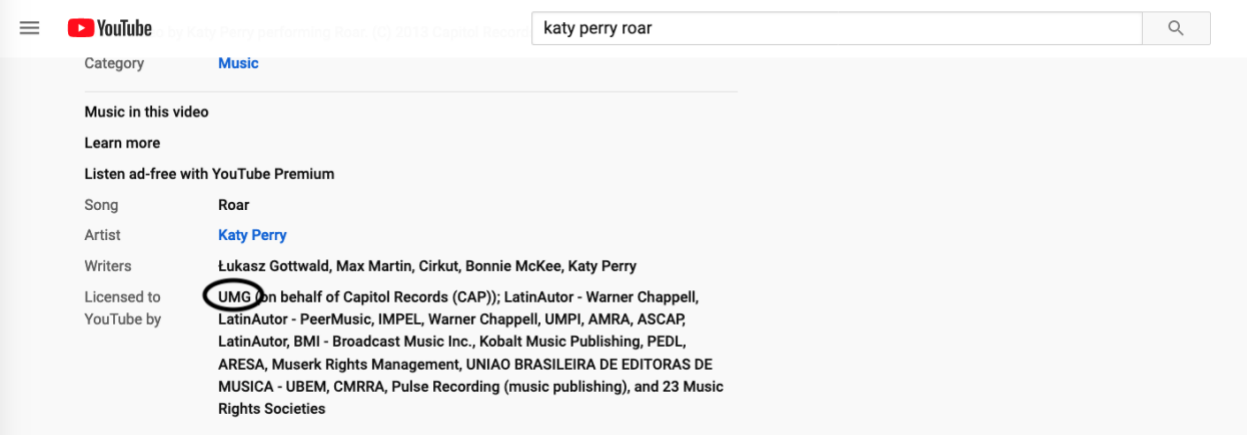
Proper credits for music video and movie clips is mandatory:
Name of Song/Music Publishing Company
Name of Movie/Film Company

The name of the music publishing company or film company can usually be found in the **SHOW MORE** section of the YouTube entry. Here's an example, using the official music video for Katy Perry's "Roar," signified by the clef note next to her name under the video window. When you scroll down past the video and the official designation, click on **SHOW MORE.**



After you click on SHOW MORE, scroll down to the listing that reads: **LICENSED TO YOUTUBE BY.** It shows the names of all the music publishing companies that have rights to the music. The U.S. rights holder is always listed first; in this case it is UMG, which stands for Universal Music Group.
So the proper on-screen credit for the music video would be: **"Roar"/UMG**

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO INCLUDE THE PERFORMER'S NAME IN THE CREDIT



EMBEDDING

Embedded video is effectively just a link; no copy of the video is being stored on your server. Therefore, you may use embedded video on VOA websites. However, you should still use caution and common sense and avoid posting videos that may violate someone's copyright. In particular, do not post videos that contain music, movies or television broadcasts unless those videos are posted on the official YouTube channel of the copyright holder. Many movie studios and music companies allow you to take embed code for trailers or video clips directly from their main site. In those cases, it's much easier to tell that you're using an official video when it's on the company website.

AUDIO

The audio from a YouTube video cannot be stripped from the video. YouTube's Terms of Service stipulate that embedded content cannot be manipulated or downloaded for use away from www.youtube.com.

In addition, YouTube – as well as Facebook -- takes audio copyright very seriously. If you add music to a video that doesn't come from one of VOA's free music accounts – Firstcom.com, Dewolfemusic.com, Apmmusic.com or Audioblocks.com -- your video will likely be taken down from the site, and **after three "copyright strikes," your account will be terminated—and you'll be barred from creating a new account.**

While we can always attempt to make a fair use claim for audio clips, it is highly recommended that you rely on the free music sites that are available.
(Also see Music, p. 68)

YOUTUBE MAKES NO REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT THE ACCURACY, USEFULNESS, SAFETY OR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS OF CONTENT APPEARING ON ITS SITE

GOOGLE EARTH GUIDELINES

VOA has rights to use Google Earth for the following VOA products:

- Television programs (including promotional ads)
- DVDs and video on demand
- Any long-form video products, including documentaries
- Printed materials

Google Earth can be used to create fly-throughs, locator maps, or basic illustrations of cities or geographic features.

We are required to credit Google Earth with an unobstructed graphic module that clearly shows that the content is provided by Google and, when applicable, a third-party data provider. This example from CNN shows how it should be done.

Please work with your EP and Graphics person to make sure Google Earth is clearly credited for any usage.

Also, any Google Maps/Google Earth images used must reflect how they would look online. For example, you are not allowed to make any changes (delete, blur, etc.) to these products that would make them look different than in the actual product.

Because it is a standalone software package, IT will need to install Google Earth on your computer.

REVEALING WEBSITES AND ADDRESSES

In most cases, websites are not considered in the public domain for purposes of publishing pictures of them. They fall under the same fair use guidelines as other copyrighted material. If you have questions about whether you can show a website, please contact the Office of General Counsel and the VOA Digital team.

Generally, website addresses can be revealed, as long as they are not for sites which promote criminal behavior or contain pornography. Avoid showing website addresses if it might be construed as a commercial for the site. Exceptions would include educational or informational sites, or charitable sites raising money for victims of a natural disaster.

When reporting on political campaigns, include links to the websites of the candidates mentioned in the piece. *(Also see Political Activity, p.11)*

AFFILIATE/RECIPROCAL LINKS

Reciprocal links to affiliate websites are permitted, under the following guidelines:

- The decision to establish an online affiliation should reflect the same editorial considerations that go into establishing a broadcast affiliation – including credibility, reputation, trust and audience reach.

- VOA Language Services should consider the total number of affiliates when determining the placement of reciprocal links. A service that has a small number of large, reputable partners is justified in establishing front-page reciprocal links. A service that has dozens of broadcasting affiliates should create an Affiliates page where they may all be listed. Each situation must be considered separately. It may be appropriate to have a homepage reciprocal link with a major web portal that is a primary news source in the language, and a separate Affiliate page with reciprocal links to broadcasting affiliates.

- Affiliate logos or text links may be used to establish reciprocal links, as appropriate.

- Reciprocal links should be reviewed on a regular basis, and VOA must reserve the right to remove the link at any time, if the affiliation ends or the target site no longer reflects the editorial integrity under which the relationship was established.

- Terms of Use must include a disclaimer that "VOA is not responsible for the content of external websites."

If you have questions about these guidelines, please contact Matthew Baise (mbaise@voanews.com) or Steven Springer (sspringer@voanews.com).

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs add a great deal to VOA stories and are necessary to give the audience a fuller experience and understanding of VOA reports. While VOA has wire services and other sources for photographs, original content taken by VOA reporters and staff is always useful.

Keep in mind that some stories will have no wire photos available so it is particularly useful for the reporter to shoot a few photos while doing the story.

The photo contracts for AFP, AP and Reuters are administered by Steven Springer (sspringer@voanews.com, x4276). When there is a question about news agency photos, please contact Steve.

GENERAL RULES

- The goal of images is to enhance the readers' understanding of the story – and make it look better on the web. Take photos that add to your story, and submit as many as you can so editors can decide which are best.

- Show the people, places and things that you talk about in your stories - If you emphasize a place or interview a person get a picture. If you cover a demonstration, show the protest signs or faces of the people. However, be aware that minors may be present at demonstrations, and you should use good judgment in photographing them in those situations.
  (Also see Interviewing & Videotaping Minors, p. 36 and Filming in Public vs. Privates Places, p. 103)

- Get close up to your subject if you can. Take photos from different perspectives and distances.

- Make sure your subject is clear, focused, and lit as well as possible.

- Always send in the largest file size possible. Photo and web editors can crop as needed and warranted.

- Headshots are good. Also try to get images of the subject in their environment and in action.

- Remember the rule of thirds.

- Shoot landscape (horizontal) instead of portrait. Landscape photos look better on social media and in Pangea. That means turning your phone 90 degrees when taking the photo.

EDITING PHOTOGRAPHS

VOA allows for the adjustment of photos for brightness, contrast and color.

However, VOA **does not permit** altering a photograph in any way that changes the meaning of the photo. This includes adding or subtracting elements to create a scene that is not an accurate representation of what was originally shot.

While it's OK to crop a photo, that should not change the meaning of the photo; for instance, cropping a photo that may leave out a key individual in the story.

CLOSELY EXAMINE DIGITAL PICTURES FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES TO ENSURE THAT THOSE IMAGES HAVE NOT BEEN ALTERED.

This is a fascinating look at how, depending on lenses, angles and perspective, a photo can present very different and distinct views of a scene.
https://www.boredpanda.com/different-perspective-telephoto-lens-vs-wide-angle-philip-davali-olafur-steinar-ry/

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS

When creating a photo to illustrate an idea, whether in the camera or using Photoshop or a similar program, the reader must always be informed that the image is a photo illustration and not a standard news image. This should be done either with a caption or in a tagline.

TECHNICAL TIPS

- Use your flash to balance out the light - If you are outside on a sunny day and you are shooting in the shade use your flash to fill heavy shadows if needed. If you are indoors and taking an image of someone in front of a window use your flash.

- Don't shoot portraits with the sun or bright light behind your subject unless you are using a flash to fill the light.

- Be careful of using a flash in front of glass or a mirror - The flash will bounce back into the lens. If you have to do this don't shoot straight on toward the glass, try to shoot at an angle to the glass.

- Be careful of microphones - Try to get a clear shot of the person without a microphone in front of their face

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SENDING PHOTO FILES

Always email your service and English-Webdesk@voanews.com or Coverage-Desk@voanews.com when submitting photos.

Always include who is paying for the photos and if they are available for use by the house. Always include caption info.

Photos can be submitted via email, any photo sharing service such as flickr or Picasa, or via ftp.

CAPTIONS/CREDITS

Reporters and producers in the field must supply the captions for your photos. Caption info is:

- Who, what, when and where.
- Credit – who took the photo.
- Keep captions short and clear – photo and web editors will often rewrite and edit them.

VOA's caption style is the same when crediting staff and stringers: **John Doe/VOA**

VOA's photo contracts with AFP, AP and Reuters allow us to use their photos on all VOAnews.com websites.

It is **MANDATORY** that **ALL** news agency photos be given proper credit, as seen in the example below: *(Also see Crediting the News Agencies, p. 20)*

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence speaks during an Easter fellowship dinner at a military base in Seoul, South Korea, April 16, 2017.

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Credits are also required for photos from other sources, including other news organizations, NGOs, a business or a social media post. Social media posts should include the social media site and the name of the person who took the photo. For example:
CBS News
Pew Research Center
Instagram/JohnSmith
Twitter/@JohnQSmith
Facebook/John Smith

Some public domain images also require a credit, such as the White House, State Department, Defense Department, Library of Congress and National Archives.
(Also see Attribution, p. 16)

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MUSIC

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The Music Library (Room G-510A) serves as the resource and research center for VOA programs containing music. Not only does the library catalog music, it also provides a historical and educational setting for producers and broadcasters to research various sources relating to music: biographies, event-driven materials, periodicals, almanacs, encyclopedias, etc.

The Music Library database currently contains a variety of musical recordings dating as far back as the 1930s. The database is catalogued by album titles, song titles, artists, and record company names/numbers. Broadcasters, producers and directors can borrow music from the Music Library. Go to the Library and apply for a Library card. You can also contact the Music Library at:
Music-Library-Staff@voanews.com

CD, albums and other music sources can be borrowed for one week at a time. **Any item you borrow cannot be taken out of the building.** Borrowers are responsible for replacing any items that are lost or stolen.

COPYRIGHT GUIDELINES

- All of the music in the Music Library, commercial, popular and production, can be used for radio programming.
- Popular music includes Top 40, rock, jazz, pop, soul, jazz, reggae, country, folk, rap, dance music, etc.
- **VOA DOES NOT HAVE THE RIGHTS TO DISTRIBUTE POPULAR MUSIC RECORDINGS FOR VIDEO PROGRAMMING OR ON ANY DIGITAL PLATFORM, INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA.**
- **ONLY** production music can be used for TV programming and digital platforms.
- The Music Library has free accounts available to all VOA staff for these online production music sites:
  - -Firstcom.com
  - -Dewolfemusic.com
  - -Apmmusic.com
- Please contact Vincent Bonner (vbon@voanews.com, 202-382-7932) or Delondra Barron (dbarron@voanews.com, 202-382-7394) to get an account opened with these sites.

In addition, the Archive & Research Group has an account with Audioblocks.com – please contact Pam Commerford (pcommerford@voanews.com, 202-382-7124) to request access to Audioblocks.com.

Commercial music could be used in a transformative (fair use) manner in a VOA video piece – perhaps 35-40 seconds to demonstrate Prince's virtuosity as a guitarist – but those uses should always be checked in advance with News Standards & Best Practices Editor Steven Springer (sspringer@voanews.com, 202-203-4276).
(*Also see YouTube Guidelines, p. 58* and *Ambient Music, p. 101)*
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AUDIO USAGE RIGHTS

These guidelines **DO NOT APPLY** to the video news feeds that VOA subscribes to. Please see the next section for that information.

Some of the news organizations listed in this section have given VOA blanket permission to use audio excerpts from some of their news programs. These permissions should be respected. Requests to use audio not covered by listed blanket clearances should be sent to Steven Springer, (sspringer@voanews.com), the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) for VOA's contracts with the news agencies.

AUDIO CLIPS FROM TV NETWORKS

VOA has had longstanding permission to use the voices of the persons being interviewed on network news programs.

VOA should use the following credit in the radio script for all programs: "As reported on [Network and program name]," or equivalent language giving credit to the appropriate news organization.

While we will always claim fair use for relevant audio excerpts, there are a few exceptions, listed below.

ABC NEWS
DO NOT use the voices of any ABC News anchors, correspondents, reporters, commentators and stringers.

- ***This Week*** **–** VOA has received permission to record the entire Sunday talk show to use content of particular interest to our audiences. However, with this permission there are some restrictions listed below:
  - We are authorized to excerpt up to two (2) minutes of the program.
  - Material may be posted on VOA's websites only if it is part of a VOA television program or video package.
  - Use of ABC talent should be kept to a minimum in the story. This is the **ONLY** exemption to the restriction on using ABC News talent in VOA programming.
  - Excerpted material cannot be used after three (3) days and the *This Week* program cannot be archived for future use.
  - This permission is **ONLY** for *This Week*.

AUDIO-ONLY USAGE FROM ALL OTHER ABC NEWS OR ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMS MUST BE CLEARED PRIOR TO USE.

CBS NEWS

DO NOT USE the voices of **ANY** CBS News employees, including anchors, reporters, correspondents, commentators or stringers.

WE DO NOT HAVE PERMISSION TO USE ANY CBS NEWS AUDIO CLIPS ON VOANEWS.COM OR ON ANY OTHER VOA WEB PRESENCE.

CNN

VOA has no overall agreement with CNN for use of audio clips, but we will claim editorial "fair use" as necessary on a case-by-case basis.

FOX NEWS CHANNEL

VOA has permission to excerpt for radio no more than 3 minutes of audio from the *Fox News Sunday* broadcast. VOA must credit *Fox News Sunday.*

ALL OTHER FOX TV PROGRAMS MUST BE CLEARED PRIOR TO USE.
FOX DOES NOT ALLOW ANY OF ITS MATERIAL TO BE REBROADCAST OVERSEAS.

NBC NEWS, MSBNC & CNBC

VOA has blanket permission to use audio excerpts from *The Today Show, Meet the Press* and *NBC Nightly News.* All news specials, documentaries and other special programming must be cleared prior to use. There is no restriction on the use of NBC correspondents' voices, but use of NBC correspondent reports is limited to U.S datelines. VOA does **NOT** have clearance to use audio actualities from any CNBC programs.

VIDEO USAGE RIGHTS

VOA has contracts with three different video newsfeed providers: Agence France Press (AFP), Associated Press (AP) and Reuters. We receive video from ABC NewsOne through our contract with AP. Each contract is unique and stands on its own.

Steven Springer (sspringer@voanews.com, 202-203-4276) is the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) for the newsfeeds. Oscar Rodriguez at OCB is the Alternate COR (orodriguez@usagm.gov, 305-437-7159).
The Media Asset Management Branch assists in administering and facilitating use of the video and audio newsfeeds.

BEFORE USING ANY VIDEO, IT IS THE PRODUCER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO REVIEW THE NEWSFEED SCRIPT SOURCE INFORMATION TO CHECK FOR RIGHTS RESTRICTIONS

COMMON FEATURES

Newsfeed scripts for the video stories cannot be used on voanews.com websites as a text-only story. However, the information contained in video scripts can be used within a VOA story when they are combined with pertinent information from other news sources and follow VOA's sourcing guidelines.

RIGHTS RESTRICTIONS

We have negotiated the rights of use with each provider to broadcast and publish our stories containing newsfeed material on TV, radio and internet. Restriction statements vary from provider to provider and cover different ground; the most common restrictions are described on the following pages.

Restrictions are usually listed near the top of the script, but also appear above specific items in the script as necessary. VOA must follow the rights restrictions listed in the scripts and we must pay attention to the source of the video. Our providers send stories in which the video may come from a variety of sources, from FIFA to ESPN to handout video to awards programs to other broadcasters. The restrictions listed reflect the rules of both the source organization and the newsfeed providers.

Since all VOA programming is available on the web, newsfeed items marked **NO ACCESS INTERNET** or **NO WEB** means the video/audio cannot be used at all, unless permission is granted by the newsfeed provider. Reuters, however, has a special requirement regarding our streaming shows, so please see the Reuters page for details. Please contact Steve if you need help with this.

You may see some variation of the following restrictions, regardless of the provider, on all the feeds:

- **TIME-LIMITED USAGE**
  You will often see limited windows of usage on stories, especially for entertainment and sports programs. Footage must be pulled off the web by the date and time listed in the script info or in advisories MAM has posted in e-mail.

- **MANDATORY COURTESY**
  When noted in the script the courtesy must appear on-screen in TV and web stories, and an audible courtesy must be used on radio.

- **NO LIBRARY / NO ARCHIVE**
  Items with this restriction should be deleted soon after use. This material is available in the DaletPlus production system for up to thirty days and is then purged. Using video labeled **NO LIBRARY** or **NO ARCHIVE** after its initial broadcast or web posting puts our contracts in jeopardy.

USING VIDEO FROM TV NETWORKS

- We **DO NOT** have blanket permission from ABC, CBS, CNN, FOX or NBC (including MSNBC and CNBC) to record and use clips from their newscasts or weekend talk shows.
  The only exception is ABC's ***This Week*** program (see next page).

- All soundbites from the other networks' weekend talk shows should be taken from our regular agency newsfeeds. However, we must follow whatever restrictions the networks place on the usage of those clips.

- There are times when we will claim "fair use" for a network news video clip that has not been fed on an agency newsfeed, but you must contact Steve to get clearance. If necessary, Steve will consult with the General Counsel's office regarding any potential legal considerations.
  (Also see Copyright and Fair Use, p. 101)

ABC NEWS

ABC News and ABC TV Entertainment programs' on-air talent cannot be used. This includes shots of the back of heads, cutaways, walking shots, standups, or anything else that may show those individuals.

ABC NEWSONE

- VOA receives material daily from the ABC News affiliate service NewsOne. As noted above, VOA cannot use on-camera talent; this applies to anchors, show hosts and reporters, whether for ABC Network or an ABC affiliate station.

- When an ABC item is listed as **PACKAGE ONLY/NO EXCERPTING,** it generally means that VOA must run the package as fed by NewsOne. We cannot lift individual sequences or shots out of a package. Steve can contact NewsOne to see if that restriction can be lifted.

- **NO RETRACKING** generally means that VOA cannot translate, summarize, adapt or otherwise make the piece shorter or longer. Please contact Steve to see whether the No Retracking restriction can be lifted.

- **NNS** is a news-sharing cooperative between ABC News and other news organizations. VOA is cleared to use all video that is marked as NNS.

- Use of all ABC standard graphics must be addressed on a case-by-case basis and users must contact Steve to seek permission before using.

- 3D graphics can be used **only if the entire package is used. There are no exceptions.**

- If a story is marked **ABC AFFILIATES ONLY**, VOA is cleared to use it. However, if a story is marked **ABC AFFILIATES ONLY, NO INTERNATIONAL CLIENTS,** please contact Steve to get clearance for use.

THIS WEEK

- VOA is authorized to excerpt up to two (2) minutes of ***This Week*.**

- Material from ***This Week*** may be posted on VOA's websites only if it is part of a VOA television program.

- Material excerpted from ***This Week*** cannot be used after three (3) days and the *This Week* program cannot be archived for future use.

- **THIS PERMISSION IS ONLY FOR ABC'S *THIS WEEK* PROGRAM.**

NO BROADCAST OR INTERNET USE OF ANY COLLEGIATE AND PROFESSIONAL SPORTS VIDEO FED BY ABC NEWSONE!

NO USE ON ANY PLATFORM OF ABC NEWS OR ABC ENTERTAINMENT PROMOS!

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (AFP)

VOA has clearance to use all AFP video unless otherwise noted below.

EXAMPLES OF AFP RESTRICTIONS

- **Source: NNIS**
  Restrictions: *NO RESALE FOR NON-EDITORIAL PURPOSES*
  VOA broadcast purposes are EDITORIAL, so we are can use items with this statement. In addition, VOA must version content for our audiences before broadcasting or posting it online.

- **Source: PARLIAMENTARY RECORDING UNIT (British Parliament)**
  Restrictions: NO RESALE FOR NON-EDITORIAL PURPOSES / NOT FOR USE IN ENTERTAINMENT OR POLITICAL SATIRE PROGRAMMES
  VOA is clear to use items with this restriction, but not in a satirical, Daily Show-type production.

WEB-RELATED RESTRICTION STATEMENTS

- **NO WEB USE or NO AFP WEB -** Stories carrying either of these restrictions cannot be used on any VOA websites.

CBS NEWS VIDEO

- Some AFP items may carry the multiple restrictions listed below, which normally indicates the video comes from CBS News. VOA **DOES NOT** have access to CBS News content.

- In the case of these restrictions, VOA CAN use the video.
  NO RESALE FOR NON-EDITORIAL PURPOSES
  NO JAPAN
  NO FREE OVER-THE-AIR BROADCASTERS IN AUSTRALIA, NO U.S. CABLE OUTLETS, FREE OVER-THE-AIR NETWORKS OR STATIONS, THEIR WEBSITES AND THEIR MOBIEL PHONE SERVICES.

SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

- **VOA CANNOT post raw or live AFP video on any of its social media pages.**

- VOA can post on its social media pages AFP video that is contained within VOA-produced TV packages. It is also OK to use AFP material in programs which are broadcast and streamed on VOA webpages.

NO ARCHIVE

- AFP recommends that we do not put video marked as No Archive on our websites or social media sites.

If you have questions about using restricted video fed by AFP, please contact Steve to see if the restrictions can be lifted.

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ASSOCIATED PRESS (AP)

- **APTN Clients Only** – VOA is able to use all stories with this restriction

- **Horizons clients and AP Lifestyle, Health and Technology clients Only** – VOA subscribes to these categories and can use any story that carries this restriction.

- **SNTV Clients** - VOA has unlimited use of stories with this restriction, as long as SNTV is the "Original Provider" or "Source" of the video. You will know these stories are SNTV stories, because "SNTV clients only" will be stated somewhere in the rights restrictions section of the script.

  However, if the "Original Provider" is a third party, such as FIFA, IOC, Tennis Properties Ltd., TAF Sports, Dorna, etc., you must follow the restrictions listed within the "Rights Restrictions" section of script.

- **Check Script For Details** – VOA can use stories with this restriction, but you must follow specific restrictions within the script if there are film clips/music videos.

- **NO ACCESS IRAN AND NO ACCESS VOA PERSIAN TV**
  VOA Persian **cannot** use AP video stories shot in and sent from Iran, or stories about Iran filmed in other countries. This includes **ALL** video of Iran, even when the restriction isn't noted on the script and includes video previously received that we have in the Video Library and the VOA Persian video server.
  NOTE: The stories restricted to the Persian Service ***can be used*** by the News Center and the other Language Services.

- **OTHER RESTRICTIONS**
  VOA *can* use stories that have restrictions to other geographic regions. For example, stories marked No Access Russia or No Access Indonesia can be used by those Language Services as well as all other VOA services.

  However, non-regional restrictions, such as No Access Internet, must be followed. Sometimes permission will be granted; in those cases please contact Steve to gain clearance.

- AP videos may sometimes be marked **NO WIRELESS. With the exception of French to Africa,** VOA has clearance to use these videos on our Internet and mobile platforms. Please contact Steve if you have questions about NO WIRELESS restrictions.

- **ABC Talent on APTN-fed stories:** On occasion, APTN will feed an ABC story. ABC talent cannot be used.
  (Also see ABC News, p. 73)

- **NO ARCHIVE**
  AP videos marked as No Archive can remain on digital platforms indefinitely.

  The exception is videos marked with an expiration date, such as Oscars, Emmys, Grammys, etc. If there is an expiration date, then the video must be removed from all websites and social

media platforms on or before that date. It is the responsibility of the News Center and language services to keep track of expiration dates and removal of video.

If a video marked as No Archive cannot be found on AP Video Hub/AP Archive, that means they do not have the rights to archive the video.

REUTERS

- Most Reuters videos are listed as **NO RIGHTS RESTRICTIONS** or the restriction listed is **NONE**; those stories can be used across all platforms at any time.

- If a Reuters video is marked **FOR EDITORIAL USE ONLY**, we can use it.

- Reuters videos may sometimes be marked **NO MOBILE USE. With the exception of French to Africa,** VOA has clearance to use these videos on our Internet and mobile platforms. Please contact Steve if you have questions about NO MOBILE USE restrictions.

- **NO USE VOA -** Stories with this restriction generally originate from NBC News and CANNOT be used by VOA

VOA DOES NOT HAVE CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS TO USE NBC CONTENT. PLEASE BE DILIGENT ABOUT CONFIRMING THE SOURCE AND DO NOT USE NBC CONTENT. THIS INCLUDES CONTENT FROM CNBC AND MSNBC.

IF THERE IS A STRONG EDITORIAL REASON TO USE NBC NEWS OR NBC AFFILIATE MATERIAL – AND SIMILAR MATERIAL CANNOT BE FOUND ON THE OTHER NEWSFEEDS – PLEASE CONTACT STEVE TO SEE WHETHER WE CAN GET CLEARANCE TO USE THE VIDEO.

- **PART NO USE VOA** – Stories with this restriction are usually a mixture of NBC and Reuters video. Please send the full script and shotlist to Steve or the Senior Archivists if you're not sure which parts of these stories you can use.

- **U.S. NETWORK POOL** - The five U.S. news networks -- ABC, CBS, CNN, FOX and NBC – shoot video daily that is designated Pool material. In most cases, this applies to domestic and overseas coverage of the president, and in election seasons, coverage of presidential candidates.
  VOA CAN USE THIS VIDEO.

  HOWEVER, VOA CANNOT USE U.S. NETWORK POOL VIDEO OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, FIRST LADY, VP'S SPOUSE, SECRETARY OF STATE, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE OR OTHER CABINET MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.

  It is strongly recommended that you call or email Steve if there is any uncertainty about the designation of a video provided to Reuters by NBC.

- **Sports items will often be heavily restricted**. Many have **NO ARCHIVE** restrictions, very often 48 hours but also 15 days or a specific date. As a rule, golf, tennis, cricket and motorcycling are heavily restricted. Stories about U.S. hockey (NHL) can be used untll the end of the current hockey season. Soccer matches are often restricted, but we can use video of soccer practice / press conferences.

- Video shot in the UK often carries this restriction:
  ITN COPYRIGHT: TV: NO ACCESS ALL DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CHANNELS DISTRIBUTED IN UK & EIRE ON SKY/VIRGIN/FREEVIEW; BBC/BSKYB GROUP: NO ACCESS WORLDWIDE ANY MEDIA; INTERNET: NO ACCESS.CO.UK WEB SITES AND ALL WEBSITES PRINCIPALLY TARGETED AT THE UK AND/OR EIRE; MOBILE: NO ACCESS WORLDWIDE; NO USE AFTER 30 DAYS FROM DATE FIRST USED ON ALL PLATFORMS.

  This is an extremely targeted restriction statement and it is recommended to call Steve for guidance. Typically we parse the statement to find the relevant info, and call for clearance or clarification when necessary. In this example, "MOBILE: NO ACCESS WORLDWIDE" is the relevant statement we'd need to decipher.

- **NO ACCESS IRAN AND NO ACCESS VOA PERSIAN**
  VOA Persian **cannot** use Reuters material filmed in or sent from Iran, or stories about Iran, even if filmed in another country, even if it is filmed by third parties on behalf of Reuters.
  NOTE: The stories restricted to the Persian Service ***can be used*** by the News Center and the other Language Services.

- **OTHER RESTRICTIONS**
  VOA *can* use stories that have restrictions to other geographic regions. For example, stories with No Access Russia or No Access Indonesia can be used by those Language Services as well as all other VOA services.

  However, non-regional restrictions, such as No Access Internet, must be followed. Sometimes permission will be granted; in those cases please contact Steve to gain clearance.

- **NO ARCHIVE**
  Reuters videos marked as No Archive can remain on digital platforms indefinitely.

  The exception is videos marked with an expiration date, such as Oscars, Emmys, Grammys, etc. If there is an expiration date, then the video must be removed from all websites and social media platforms on or before that date. It is the responsibility of the News Center and language services to keep track of expiration dates and removal of video.

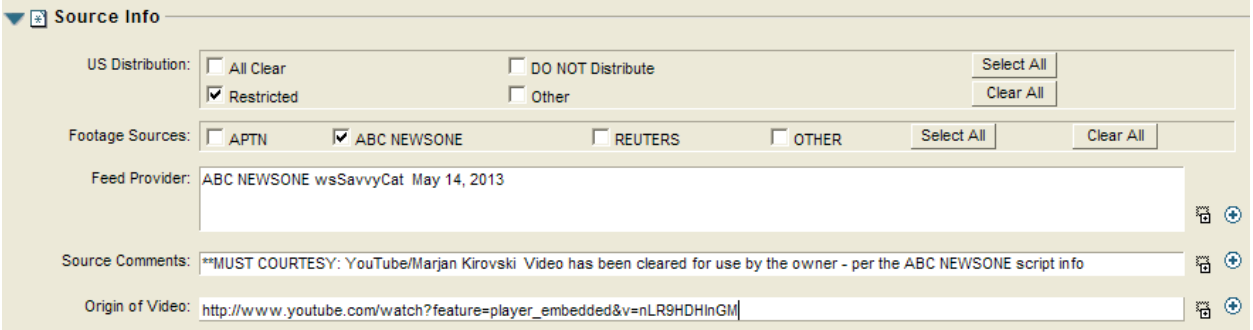
  If a video marked as No Archive cannot be found on Reuters Connect, that means they do not have the rights to archive the video.

THE RESTRICTIONS OF OUR VIDEO PROVIDERS CAN CHANGE AT ANY TIME

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT STEVE

DOCUMENTING SOURCE VIDEO IN DALETPLUS

Everyone who creates a story or program using DaletPlus must enter source info in the Asset Manager Form (AMF). The **Source Info** module is the third section on the AMF form. The example below is an example of source info in an AMF of a story, showing the kind of information expected when available. (Plus signs at the end of each field allow additional space for more info.)



U.S. Distribution: A quick reference field to indicate whether the story is cleared for fulfilling a request from a U.S. requestor. If your story or program master is entirely VOA original, **All Clear** should be check-marked. If it has non-VOA content (ABC NewsOne, AFP, APTN or Reuters) **Restricted** will be checked. **This means that some clips will have to be cleared for US distribution.** The default is **DO NOT Distribute**.

Footage Sources: A quick way to note the feeds that are in included the story or program master. For **program masters**, the archive liaison may use "select all" for news programs, if in assembling the program the service uses all of our content providers. For **VOA stories**, the producer will need to be specific, so the searcher knows how involved tracking down the sources may be.

Feed Provider: A free text field to note specifically the story slug /date and source of vendor-provided clips used in a story. When a U.S. request is being filled, this information will allow the requestor to contact the appropriate newsfeed source to obtain clearance to use the video in the United States.

Source Comments: Can be used to further clarify use if necessary / possible.

Origin of video: To be used when video when is different from the newsfeed source itself; for example, video from YouTube. This field should be used for story AMFs, rather than for use for program master AMFs.

Please e-mail questions or concerns to senior-archivists@voanews.com. You may also call the Video Library's point person on this project, Bojan Klima at 382-5510.

NEWS AGENCY IDS & THE DOT

Incoming video from AFP, AP and Reuters are stamped with the ID of each news agency as the video is recorded in DaletPlus/Webspace.

ABC NewsOne video is stamped with the Dot.

THE IDs AND THE DOT INDICATE THAT THE STAMPED MATERIAL CANNOT BE SHARED WITH OR USED BY ANY VOA DOMESTIC CLIENTS OR REQUESTORS.

The IDs and the Dot appear in the **UPPER LEFT** of the frame **AND CANNOT BE OBSCURED**.

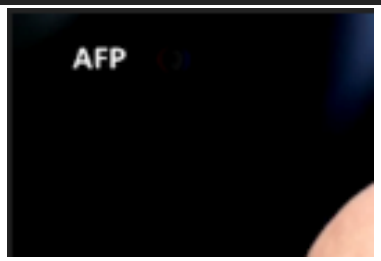
- **IF A SERVICE INCLUDES NEWS AGENCY VIDEO IN ITS PACKAGES, PROGRAMS OR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS, PLEASE MAKE SURE THE AGENCY ID OR THE DOT IS ALWAYS VISIBLE.**

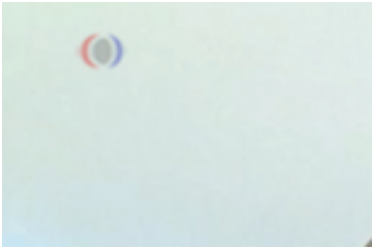
- **THIS IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN GUARANTEE THAT NON-VOA VIDEO WILL BE PROPERLY NOTED AND AVAILABLE FOR EASY REFERENCE DURING A VIDEO ASSESSMENT.**

- **ALL VIDEO DOWNLOADED FROM THE ABC NEWSONE, AFPFORUM, AP VIDEO HUB AND REUTERS CONNECT WEBSITES MUST HAVE THE PROPER ID ADDED TO THE VIDEO.**

- **IF YOU INSERT THE WRONG AGENCY ID YOU CANNOT RE-INSERT ANOTHER ID. YOU WILL HAVE TO START THE PROCESS OVER.**

This is how the agency IDs and the dot appear on incoming feeds:





- **ABC, AFP, AP AND REUTERS VIDEO IN THE VOA LIBRARY PRIOR TO JULY 3, 2013 DOES NOT HAVE THE AGENCY IDs OR THE DOT EMBEDDED IN THE VIDEO. THEREFORE, ALL ABC, AFP, AP OR REUTERS LIBRARY VIDEO PRIOR TO 7/3/13 MUST HAVE THE PROPER AGENCY ID OR DOT ADDED TO THE VIDEO.**

- **IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE REPORTER, PRODUCER AND/OR VIDEO EDITOR TO ENSURE THAT THE PROPER AGENCY ID OR DOT IS ADDED TO THE EDITED MATERIAL.**

- **EXISTING FILE FOOTAGE THAT ALREADY HAS THE DOT DOES NOT NEED TO BE RE-STAMPED WITH AN AGENCY ID.**

THE DOT MUST BE ADDED TO CLIPS PRIOR TO 7/3/13 FROM THESE SOURCES

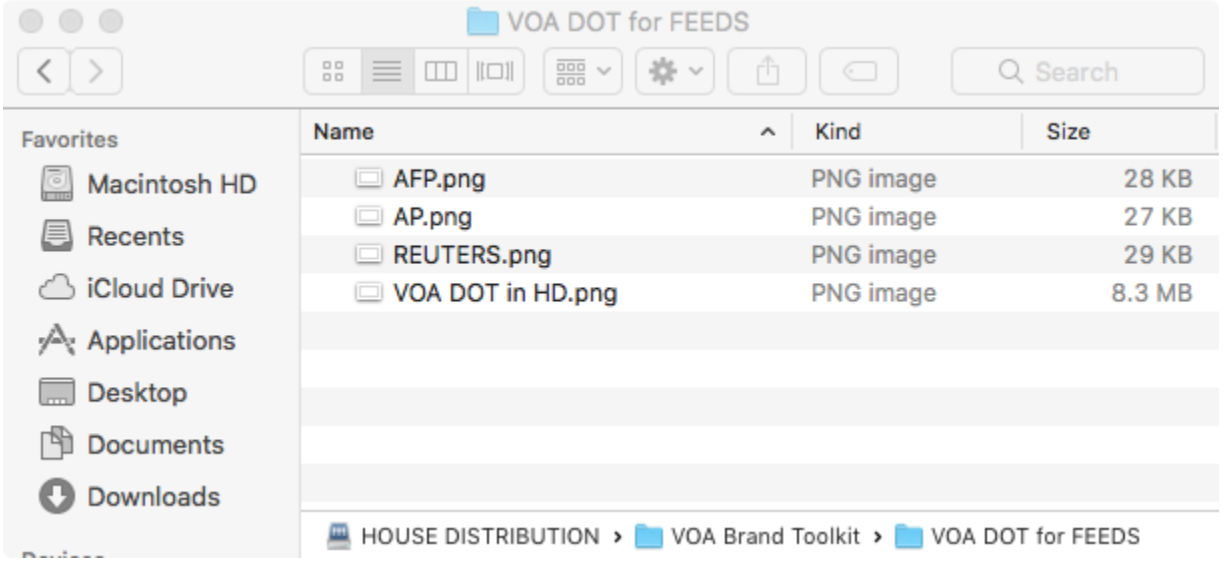
- IRINN
- Journal of American Medicine (JAMA)
- NewsMarket
- UNIFEEDS (United Nations video)
- Other Acquired Material:
  -From VOA Acquisitions Branch
  -Obtained by VOA Reporters
  -Obtained from a Third Party

THESE SOURCES PRIOR TO 7/3/13 DO NOT REQUIRE THE DOT OR OTHER ID

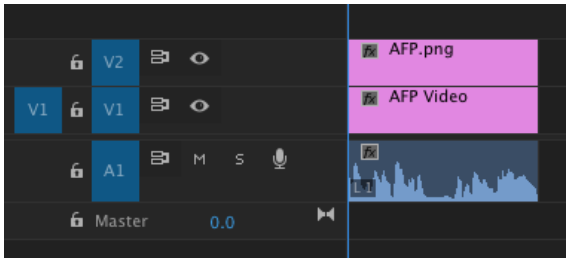
- VOA Original Footage
- House Recording Studio (Including hearings and news conferences)
- NASA
- Pentagon
- Senate Recording Studio (Including hearings and news conferences)
- State Department
- White House

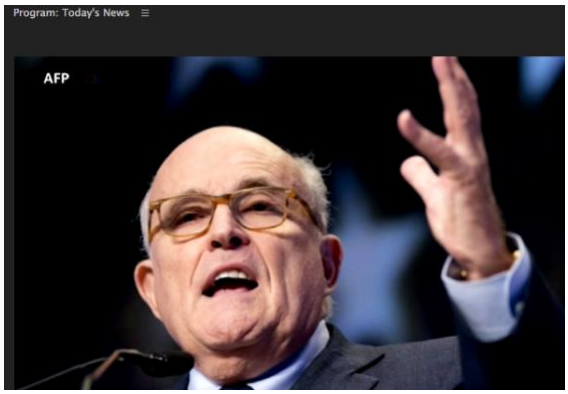
ADDING AN AGENCY ID/DOT IN PREMIERE PRO

In order to add the news agency IDs or the Dot to your video in Premiere, you will first need to import the graphic files.
They are located at: \\voa_creative\HOUSE DISTRIBUTION\VOA Brand Toolkit\VOA DOT for FEEDS

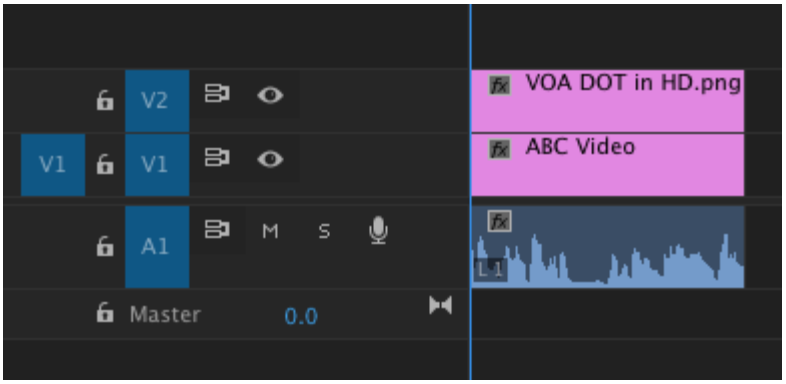


Import the needed files into Premiere and drag them to a video track above your footage. The graphic files will automatically key themselves over the video with their built in alpha channels.





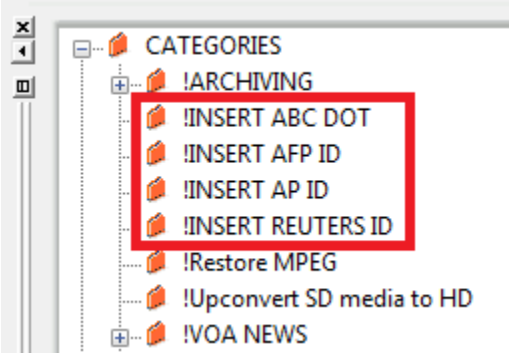
Use the **VOA DOT in HD**.png file for ABC News video:



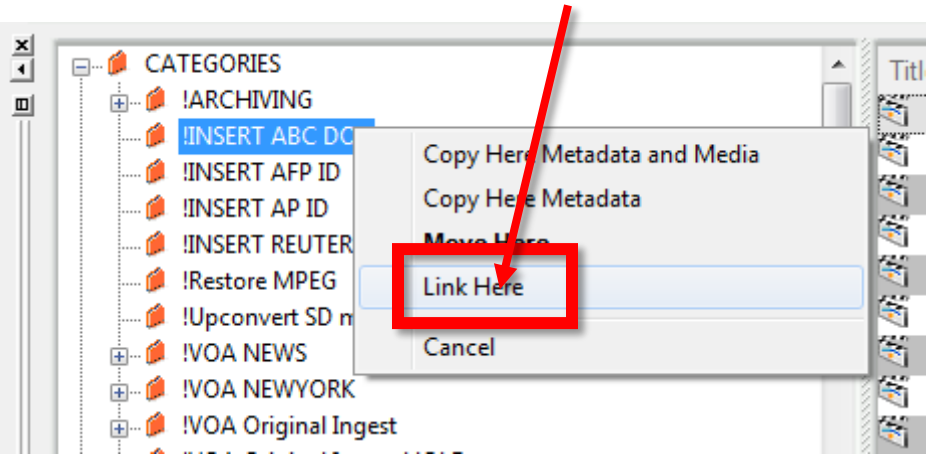
ADDING AN AGENCY ID/DOT IN DALETPLUS

THE DROP FOLDER PROCESS WILL REPLACE THE ORIGINAL VIDEO. IT CANNOT BE UNDONE. BE SURE THE VIDEO IS LINKED TO THE CORRECT FOLDER!

Dalet users will find drop folders towards the top of the CATEGORIES folder. There is a folder for each of the newsfeeds.

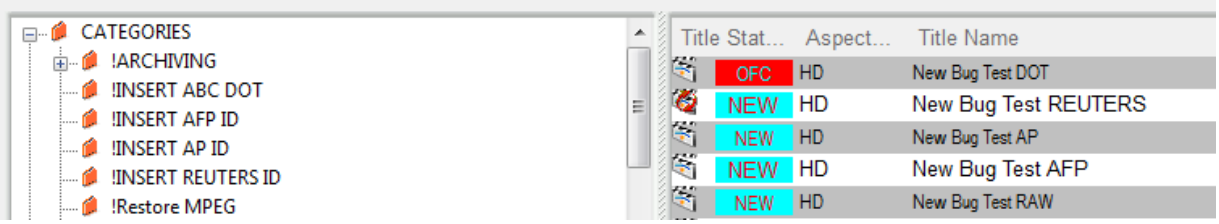


Locate the footage in Dalet that needs the bug. Right mouse click, hold and drag the video to the appropriate folder, and release the mouse button. Choose **Link Here**.



The video will begin rendering and the original video will be replaced with the video and the bug. While the video is processing, the status will change to OFC (Out for Conversion). This process usually takes a few minutes. The Clapboard Icon will first show a 'Red X' followed by a 'Red Circle'.

When the status changes back to 'NEW' and the Clapboard Icon is clear, the process is complete and you can view your video with the selected bug burned into the upper left corner.



DO NOT VIEW OR USE THE VIDEO UNTIL THE CONVERSION PROCESS IS COMPLETE AND THE VIDEO IS BACK ONLINE!

Once finished, the original video will have the appropriate agency ID or dot burned into it.

This link takes you to the video tutorial version of these instructions: Agency ID & Dot Video Tutorial

THE VOA DOT MUST BE ADDED TO CERTAIN PROPRIETARY VIDEO!
SEE LIST ON PAGE 82

IF THERE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER TO ADD AN AGENCY ID OR THE DOT TO OLDER LIBRARY VIDEO, PLEASE CONTACT STEVEN SPRINGER (sspringer@voanews.com)

NEWSMARKET

Newsmarket (www.thenewsmarket.com) is an online provider of video. Although the site has a lot of available material, there are a number of guidelines that VOA must follow in order to use the video.

- You must be an employee or contractor working with VOA and use your work e-mail (@voanews.com) to access the site. Pam Commerford (pcommerford@voanews.com), chief of the Media Asset Management Branch has done pre-registration for many employees; if you need to establish an account, please contact Pam.

- Keep your password confidential; it is for your use only.

- Registered users are responsible for searching images and **ensuring that no costs are associated with the material. If costs are required, funding must come from your Language Service or Division.** The Office of Information Services will **NOT** pay for material acquired from Newsmarket.

- The VOA producer or Language Service is responsible for obtaining the terms and conditions of use of the material. Newsmarket makes no claims about the accuracy of the content on its website, so producers must be sure to exercise VOA journalistic standards in the choice and use of material.

- Credit must be given for content used and **logos or copyrighted images cannot be changed or obscured.**

- You must use the content for editorial purposes only.

- You **cannot** store the original content for future use. The content from Newsmarket must be deleted from your workspace when you are finished with your initial use. Should you need the content again, you can go back to the website and re-capture it.

- **The material that you use in a VOA story or program can and will be archived**; there is no restriction on this material.

- The content incorporated in your stories and shows can be distributed on all VOA platforms.

- **The Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) is included in this agreement, meaning that VOA and OCB ONLY can share material that is acquired from Newsmarket.**

RESTRICTIONS

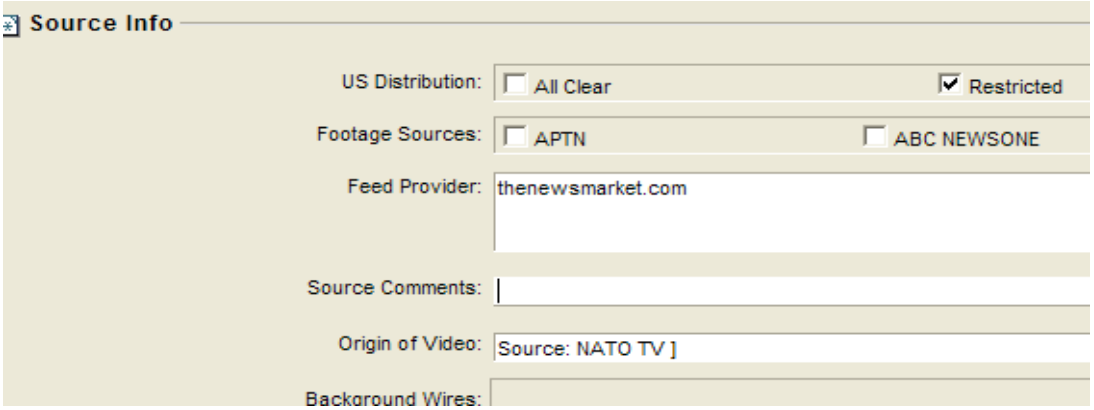
- You cannot provide unedited content to other organizations, **including the USAGM grantees RFE/RL, RFA and Alhurra.**

- You cannot use the Newsmarket logo or trademark in a way other than how it is presented in your story.

- You cannot use any technology to monitor, copy or deep link with Newsmarket.

Assets are brought into DaletPlus to the NEWSMARKET folder: INCOMING FEEDS > NEWSMARKET. Associated metadata needs to be added to the Asset Manager Form (AMF), include source information, and **a VOA DOT added to the video**.
(Also see Domestic Distribution of VOA Content, p. 93)

Example of Newsmarket info to add to AMF in DaletPlus:



US Distribution: Rights of use do not extend beyond VOA's use, so US DISTRIBUTION should be marked RESTRICTED.

Footage Sources: OTHER should be selected.

Feed Provider: thenewsmarket.com

Origin of Video: Indicate the owner of the source video. In the example, it's NATO TV.

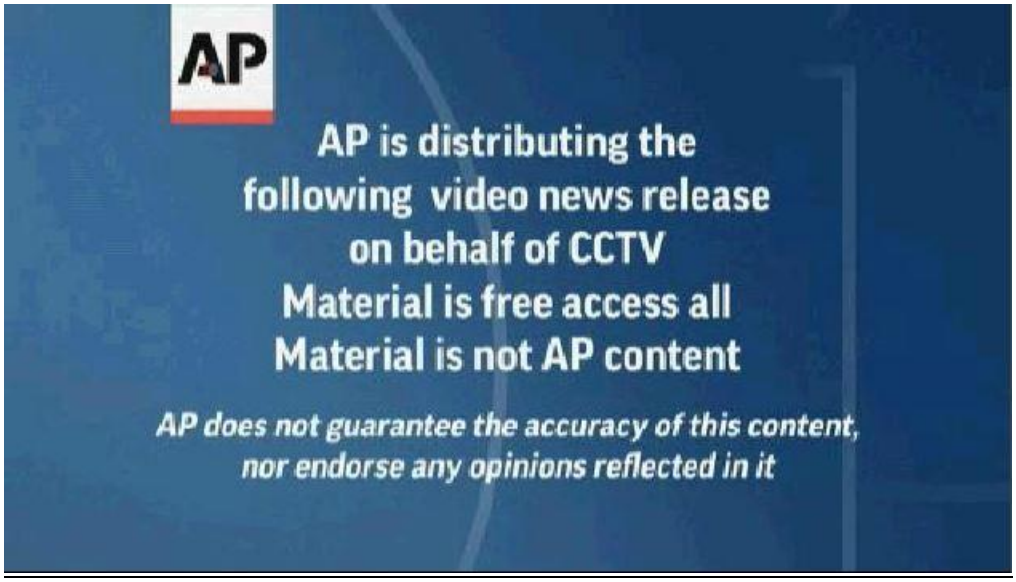
All questions regarding registration on Newsmarket and the use of its material should go to Pam Commerford (pcommerford@voanews.com, 202-382-7124)

USING CONTENT FROM STATE-RUN MEDIA

Any country's official news agency is a valid single source **when referring to government policy or news events in that country**. In these cases VOA must identify the news agency in its copy.

Note the distinction, **in that country.** For example, a report by China's official news agency about North Korea may not be a valid single source.

In addition, VOA's newsfeed providers AP and Reuters have agreements in place to distribute material provided by CCTV, Chinese State Television. AP includes a disclaimer for all CCTV material, as seen in this screen grab:



Reuters does not provide a video disclaimer for CCTV material, but this notice appears at the bottom of every script Reuters provides from CCTV:
© Copyright CCTV. The content in this story, including video and script is provided by China Central Television (CCTV) and is copyright CCTV. Thomson Reuters does not guarantee the accuracy of, or endorse the views or opinions given in, this package. THIS STATEMENT SUPERSEDES ALL OTHER STATEMENTS RELATING TO COPYRIGHT ATTACHED TO THIS CONTENT.

While the video that CCTV and other state-controlled media outlets like RT produces often comes from areas where coverage is otherwise unavailable, VOA policy for using content provided by state-controlled media is that it should be reviewed by senior editors in a service, by the News Center or by the agency's Editor for News Standards & Best Practices before any decision is made about airing or publishing the video.

State-run media material that is cleared for broadcast or for use on the web **MUST** include proper credit to that news organization and the disclaimer that VOA cannot confirm the accuracy of the material. For video usage, the on-screen credit should be either: "From CCTV" or "CCTV Video." This guidance is the same for material received from RT or similar state-run media outlets.

It is understood that there may be times when we would want to use the video, such as when it's the only known video of a major news event or if we're comparing how VOA and other news organizations cover stories.

HOWEVER, ANY USE OF STATE-RUN MEDIA VIDEO SHOULD BE DONE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A LARGER PACKAGE THAT IS BEING PRODUCED BY THE NEWS CENTER OR A LANGUAGE SERVICE.

WE SHOULD NOT RUN A FULL PACKAGE FROM CCTV, RT OR ANOTHER STATE-RUN OUTLET SIMPLY BECAUSE WE HAVE IT AVAILABLE.

VIDEO NEWS RELEASES (VNRs)

A video news release (VNR) is a video segment made to look like a news report, but is instead created by a public relations firm, advertising agency, marketing firm, corporation, or even by a government agency. VNRs are produced with the aim of shaping public opinion, promoting commercial products and services, publicizing individuals or supporting other interests.

VNRs may include interviews with experts (who may be paid by the company or ad agency for their appearance in the VNR); man on the street interviews that may be done with professional actors; and pictures of corporate logos to support the product or brand being promoted.

Although we occasionally receive VNRs from APTN and Reuters that does not make them any more legitimate for use by VOA.

There may be times when material from a VNR is appropriate for **excerpting** in a video package.

Example #1

If the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York discovers a new treatment for prostate cancer and the Center provides a video of its research work, VOA can, and should, use some of that video to illustrate the story.

- The script must say the video was provided by the Center, and there must be a visual credit to the Center as well.

Example #2

Apple unveils the latest version of the iPhone and sends out a VNR showing the latest changes in the phone and how it operates. VOA can use some of the video to illustrate its story.

- The script must say the video was provided by Apple, and there must be a visual credit to Apple as well.

Please keep in mind, however, that as with fair use of video, all instances of whether to use material from a VNR will not be the same, so always check first with Steven Springer (sspringer@voanews.com)

VOA SHOULD NEVER AIR A VIDEO NEWS RELEASE IN ITS ENTIRETY

More detailed information about feeds and rights can be found in Rights Usage Guidelines Presentation and the Video Newsfeed Guide found on the Media Asset Management Branch (MAM) page on Sharepoint.

DOMESTIC DISTRIBUTION OF VOA CONTENT

- **THE SMITH-MUNDT RESTRICTIONS APPLY TO DISTRIBUTION OF VOA CONTENT & PROGRAMMING WITHIN THE UNITED STATES.**

- **THEY DO NOT IN ANY WAY IMPACT VOA'S COVERAGE OF NEWS STORIES. VOA IS FULLY AUTHORIZED AND EXPECTED TO COVER STORIES IN THE U.S. FOR DISTRIBUTION TO FOREIGN AUDIENCES OVERSEAS.**

You can read the full guidance here: USAGM Smith-Mundt Guidelines

USAGE REQUESTS

The law authorizes individuals and organizations to request VOA content. From time to time, VOA staff may receive requests for **one-time** use of VOA content, or the request may be for **ongoing use** of VOA programming. These requests could come from U.S.-based media organizations, diaspora media outlets, overseas media outlets, or from educational institutions.

VOA STAFF SHOULD NOT RESPOND DIRECTLY TO REQUESTS

Instead:

- Requests for **ONE-TIME USE** of VOA original content should be directed to this online form: https://www.usagm.gov/work-with-us/content-requests/voa/

- Requests for **ONGOING USE OF VOA PROGRAMMING** should be sent to the USAGM Business Development Office at BusinessDevHQ@usagm.gov.

ALTHOUGH VOA MAY MAKE ITS CONTENT AVAILABLE TO QUALIFIED REQUESTORS, SMITH-MUNDT PROHIBITS VOA FROM:

1. **SPENDING ITS FUNDING TO DIRECTLY INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION WITHIN THE UNITED STATES, AND**
2. **SYNDICATING ITS CONTENT THROUGH DOMESTIC MEDIA OUTLETS WITH THE INTENT TO DEVELOP AUDIENCES WITHIN THE UNITED STATES.**

- **UNAIRED/UNPUBLISHED ORIGINAL VOA MATERIAL SHOULD NOT BE SHARED.** Please forward those requests to VOA senior management, the News Standards & Best Practices Editor and the Office of General Counsel.
  (Also see Requests for Unaired/Unpublished Material, p. 42, Usage Requests, p. 93 and (VOA Firewall, p. 99)

If you have questions about usage requests, please email Usage-Requests@voanews.com.

TALKING ABOUT VOA CONTENT & PROGRAMMING

The Smith-Mundt Act forbids VOA personnel to attempt to develop audiences within the United States. The funds which USAGM and thus VOA receive are only authorized to create and distribute news and information to "foreign audiences abroad," and the law requires VOA to ensure that VOA does not distribute content and programming with the intent of influencing "public opinion in the United States."

If you attend a journalism or media conference such as NAB, EIJ, ONA, NABJ, NAHJ, SAJA, or attend an event at the National Press Club, and someone from a domestic U.S. news organization asks you about VOA's work, you can freely talk about the content we produce every day. Nothing in Smith-Mundt prevents that.

- **VOA STAFF SHOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO MAKE A DIRECT OFFER OF VOA CONTENT TO ANY DOMESTIC NEWS OUTLET.**

- **VOA STAFF CANNOT SPEND ANY ADVERTISING OR OTHER FUNDS TO SPECIFICALLY TARGET OR DEVELOP AUDIENCES IN THE U.S.**

- **OTHER ACTIONS MAY BE AUTHORIZED AGAINST INDIVIDUALS VIOLATING THIS RULE**

- **VIOLATION OF THIS RULE AND/OR OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE SMITH-MUNDT ACT WILL RESULT IN THE TERMINATION OF YOUR AD BUDGET AND THE LOSS OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACCESS TO YOUR SERVICE'S SOCIAL ACCOUNTS.**

DOMESTIC ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF HIGH-QUALITY JOURNALISTS, ENHANCE VOA'S CREDIBILITY, AND/OR DEVELOP NEW SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Domestic VOA activities such as town halls, forums, partnerships and public relations activities may be permitted if the purpose of the activity is to support the recruitment and retention of high-quality journalists, enhance VOA's credibility, and/or to develop new sources of information. Please clear such Town Halls, Forums, and other such events; proposed partnerships arrangements; and proposed public relations arrangements in advance with VOA leadership, who should consult with the Office of General Counsel.

TOWN HALLS

VOA journalists or other staff may host or play a role in Town Halls or related events if the purpose of the event is to engage overseas audiences.

PARTNERSHIPS

In line with efforts to adhere to the highest standards of broadcast journalism, there may be times, subject to any required approvals, that VOA journalists appear as subject matters experts in other news outlets. This may be allowed if the purpose is to benefit VOA and thus the agency by either facilitating development of new sources of information, enhancing VOA's credibility, and/or contributing to the recruitment or retention of high-caliber journalists. In other cases, the purpose may be to disseminate VOA content overseas as part of an arrangement with another news organization.

VOA leadership may be able to approve certain partnership arrangements if the purpose is to enhance the quality or distribution of USAGM content to foreign audiences overseas. Such partnerships must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The final Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is signed by the USAGM CEO.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

VOA journalists or other VOA staff may be able to engage in certain public relations arrangements if the purpose is to develop new sources of information, help recruit new journalistic talent to the agency, or to educate and inform stakeholders about VOA's mission, programs and activities. However, those arrangements must focus on VOA's journalists as subject-matter or regional experts. Public relations pitches should never attempt to place VOA-produced content in domestic broadcasts or focus on VOA storylines.

All proposed arrangements with external public relations firms should be routed through the Office of Contracts. The Office of Contracts should send all proposed arrangements relating to public relations activities or the placement of subject-matter experts to the Smith-Mundt Act Task Force for review. VOA leadership should confirm these reviews have occurred before engaging any public relation's firms.

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SUMMARY

Smith-Mundt allows us to:
-Provide materials upon request
-Engage in certain partnerships
-Provide opportunities for exposure for our journalists to enhance retention and recruitment; etc.

It **does not** prevent us from using the internet and social media to distribute our products to audiences overseas just because people in the U.S. might also see the material.

These exceptions do not allow VOA to attempt to target audiences in the United States. Ultimately, **if** it looks like the intent is to subvert the rules – i.e. **if the USAGM goal is to influence U.S. opinion, or otherwise develop audiences within the United States** -- then the activity is prohibited.

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CORRECTIONS

VOA's reputation and credibility are the hallmarks of the organization. The News Center and the Language Services produce news content, programming and services across many platforms and under daily deadline pressures. While our goal is always to be accurate and fair, occasionally we will present incorrect or inaccurate information. A meaningful policy for correcting significant errors will strengthen our trust with viewers, listeners and readers. As such, these errors will be corrected in a clear and timely manner, with appropriate prominence.

TV & RADIO BROADCASTS

If we make a mistake that needs correcting, we should do so as quickly as possible while the same show is on the air. If the error is not detected immediately, then preferably the correction should be aired on the same program in which the original error occurred, whether it's the following day or week. Make a point to say "On _____ day (state the day and date and time), we erred in our reporting..." then go on to explain what we said that was wrong, make the correction and close by saying, "Voice of America regrets the error."

VOA WEBSITES

If the error is a simple typo that does not change facts or understanding of the story, we consider it a minor change and simply correct it without further mention. If the error is substantive or one of fact, we change it, add an asterisk (*), then a note at the bottom saying when it was corrected and what was wrong originally.

SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

Facebook: Correcting an error on Facebook should follow the same procedure as on voanews.com websites. Update/edit the Facebook post and explain why the information was corrected.

Twitter: A good method for correcting an error on Twitter is to **subtweet** the correction. On the next page you'll see how *Slate* handled posting the wrong photo (actor Javier Bardem) when tweeting about Vladimir Putin.

The correction begins "@Slate CORRECTION:" so that *Slate* is replying to its own original tweet. The result is that anyone viewing the original tweet can see the correction in the stream of replies. Equally important, it refers to the photo without showing it again.

People viewing the correction tweet on its own can also see it is part of a conversation linked to the original, offending tweet.
NOTE: If you reply to yourself, then anyone who follows you will see the reply. So in terms of who can see the correction, it's just as good as sending it as a normal tweet.

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LEGAL ISSUES

This section provides brief introductions to various areas of the law that may apply to VOA journalists. These guidelines provide an overview to certain areas of the law and are not a substitute for a legal opinion from the Office of General Counsel (OGC). Please contact OGC when you have a specific legal question.

VOA FIREWALL

The "firewall" exists to maintain the credibility of reporting by U.S. international broadcasters. The firewall is violated whenever another U.S. government agency or a U.S. government official tries to influence our work by putting undue pressure on a VOA journalist or on the agency itself or takes any other action that may undermine the journalistic credibility or independence of VOA journalists. This protection arises from numerous provisions of the International Broadcasting Act (IBA), the Agency's governing statute.

WHAT COULD RESULT IN A FIREWALL VIOLATION

- A firewall violation would likely be a U.S. ambassador or other State Department personnel demanding that you not air a particular interview or that you give a specific slant to a VOA news story.

- If a federal official from outside of VOA or from another federal agency asks you to use your access/position as a journalist to gather or provide information on their behalf, that would appear be a firewall violation.

- Firewall violations could also occur when someone outside of VOA takes actions that directly intrude on VOA's professional independence and interferes with news coverage. If a directive from outside the newsroom, including from USAGM, is imposed which you think impermissibly restricts your ability to objectively report the news, or otherwise act in a manner inconsistent with the best practices of professional journalism, please notify your Service Chief and Division Director immediately.

- A direct request from non-VOA personnel to the News Center or a Language Service for your notes or unpublished recordings of video or audio may be a firewall violation. Those requests must immediately be directed to the VOA Director and the General Counsel's Office.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A VOA EMPLOYEE OR CONTRACTOR TURN OVER UNAIRED OR UNPUBLISHED NEWS COVERAGE TO ANY THIRD PARTY WITHOUT FIRST CONSULTING WITH VOA SENIOR MANAGEMENT.

WHAT IS NOT A FIREWALL VIOLATION

The firewall should not discourage VOA journalists from interviewing government officials or USG officials from appearing on VOA programs. It is critical to ensuring that VOA journalists and editors make the final decisions on what stories to cover and how they are covered.

Should a third party, such as a court, law enforcement agency, or other person or organization request that VOA turn over reporters' notes or unpublished content through appropriate legal authority -- such as a court order or Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request -- that is not a firewall violation. However, **immediately** turn the request over to your Service Chief, Division Director, or to the VOA Director's Office. (For FOIA requests, please coordinate through VOA's designated FOIA point of contact.)

A supervisor or editor who asks for relevant editorial script or video changes in a story is not committing a firewall violation. That is part of the everyday nature of journalism.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE FIREWALL

The firewall does not start or stop at one specific point in the agency. It exists across all of USAGM and VOA. It is important that staff not only reports up the chain of command when other government officials or agencies approach VOA, **but that leadership communicates challenges to VOA's reporting down the chain** so that it's clear to editors that coverage has been called into question and the journalistic reasoning behind any corrective actions.

IF YOU BELIEVE THAT A FIREWALL VIOLATION HAS OCCURRED, NOTIFY YOUR SERVICE CHIEF AND DIVISION DIRECTOR IMMEDIATELY.

IF YOU BELIEVE YOUR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR HAS ENGAGED IN A FIREWALL VIOLATION PLEASE DISCUSS THE ISSUE WITH THE EDITOR OF NEWS STANDARDS & BEST PRACTICES.

(*Also see Requests for Unaired/Unpublished Material, p. 42 and Domestic Distribution of VOA Content, p. 93)*

COPYRIGHT & FAIR USE

Copyright is a form of protection provided by U.S. law to the authors of original artistic works. Artistic works include photographs, video, audio, music, motion pictures, commercials, written products, as well as footage from other news broadcasters. You should not use a copyrighted work unless (1) you have permission to use, whether via VOA's contracts (such as VOA's video feed or photo contracts) or another negotiated license agreement, or (2) your use of the work falls under the "fair use" doctrine.

FAIR USE

Determining whether use of copyrighted material is a **fair use** requires a balancing of four factors: (1) the purpose and character of your use; (2) the nature of the copyrighted work; (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for the copyrighted work. Application of these factors and the fair use doctrine is highly fact-specific and requires a case-by-case analysis.

A use of a copyrighted work is more likely to be a fair use if the material is directly relevant to a news story and the excerpt used is no longer than necessary to achieve the intended purpose. On the other hand, the use of copyrighted material such as a music clip simply to enhance the production value of a television package, for example, is not likely to be a fair use. Keep in mind that just because a video or audio clip is newsworthy does not automatically make VOA's use of it fair. A Fair Use Self-Help Guide with Frequently Asked Questions is available on the agency's SharePoint site.
(Also see YouTube Guidelines, p. 58, Music p. 68, Audio Usage Rights, p. 69 and Video Usage Rights, p. 71)

AMBIENT MUSIC

Any background music captured at recorded events should be edited out and replaced by narration or by music from the Music Library, because popular music uploaded to YouTube – regardless of its source – is likely to be hit with automated copyright strikes.
(Also see YouTube Guidelines, p. 58 and Music, p. 68)

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Copyright restrictions do not apply to works in the public domain, which include most U.S. federal government works, such as photos, maps, or video found on whitehouse.gov, state.gov, nasa.gov, cia.gov, and other government websites. Be sure to check the Copyright or Terms of Use/Terms of Service pages of these and other websites before using any content.

A work is also in the public domain if it is no longer under copyright protection. This depends on when and where the work was first published, but generally, works published in the U.S. before 1923 are in the public domain. Contact OGC for specific questions about older works or copyright terms in foreign jurisdictions.

LICENSED MATERIAL

VOA has several license agreements with third parties to use their copyrighted material. The terms of these agreements govern use of the material provided by the licenses, notwithstanding the applicability of the fair use doctrine. When using material from one of VOA's feed providers, such as ABC NewsOne, AFP, APTN and Reuters, for example, you must check all restrictions that may limit the story's use. Questions about the video feeds should be directed to the COR, Steven Springer, and to VOA Media Asset Management Branch at Senior-Archivists@voanews.com.
(Also see Video Usage Rights, p. 71)

REQUESTING PERMISSION

Because fair use can sometimes be difficult to determine with certainty, VOA producers are strongly encouraged to seek permission to use copyrighted material from the rightful copyright owner. You should start the process of identifying and contacting the owner of copyrighted content as early in your production process as possible, since it may take several days or weeks to identify the copyright owner and negotiate a license. Please note that obtaining permission in writing, using the standard USAGM/VOA release form, is highly preferable to getting permission orally or via email. A template release form -- to be edited and modified, as needed -- is available on the Best Practices Sharepoint page.

On occasion, a third party may request to either amend the VOA form or insist on using its own licensing agreement. Such outside agreements may contain terms to which USAGM/VOA cannot agree. Please consult OGC when presented with a third party release form or licensing agreement.

TRADEMARK

A trademark is an intellectual property right in a particular "mark" used to identify a good or service, such as a name, slogan, symbol or logo. For example, "Voice of America" is a registered trademark. It is unlawful to use a trademark in a manner that confuses consumers about the source or sponsorship of goods or services. This is rarely an issue in news broadcasting, since the law allows you to use a mark without permission in a news story if the mark is used in an informational sense. For example, if you are reporting on the BP oil spill, it is appropriate to show the BP logo to identify the company. However, if you are launching a new VOA program, avoid using trademarked slogans or titles.

TRADEMARK & SPORTING EVENTS

When covering major sporting events such as the Olympics, VOA journalists must be careful with using official trademarks, such as the interlocking Olympic rings. For example, it could be argued that a VOA graphic incorporating the VOA background/colors/image with the official Olympic logo creates an unauthorized association between VOA, a non-Olympics marketing partner, and the Olympic brand.

ALTHOUGH THE PHRASE "VOICE OF AMERICA" IS TRADEMARKED BY THE AGENCY, "VOA" AND THE VOA LOGO ARE NOT TRADEMARKED.

More information on the above topics can be found at the Best Practices site on Sharepoint.

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FILMING IN PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE PLACES

Generally, news media have the right to be in public places and on public property to gather information, photographically or otherwise. VOA journalists should be mindful, however, about rules, permits, or prohibitions on filming or taking of photographs at certain meetings, sporting events, or in private spaces such as businesses and shops. Similarly, journalists should seek permission from an owner or occupant (even if the occupant is not the owner) before entering private property or a residence.
(Also see Covering Criminal Activity, p. 34)

PROOF OF INSURANCE

From time to time, VOA staff may be asked to provide a certificate of liability insurance when filming in locations where event organizers or property owners want to protect themselves against third party bodily injury and property damage. While most private sector media organizations have liability insurance, the U.S. Government **self-insures** against liabilities. Therefore, the agency does not purchase liability insurance, and there is no such certificate that we can provide.

Instead, the Office of General Counsel provides a letter explaining this that staff can send to the appropriate parties. Two versions of the letter – one on VOA letterhead and one on USAGM letterhead -- are now available in Word documents on the VOA Best Practices SharePoint page:
VOA Insurance Letter USAGM Insurance Letter

Each letter has blanks so that you can fill in the names of VOA staff that will be on location and the name of the property/location you will be working at. Use the VOA letterhead if you choose to have your service chief or division director sign it. Use the USAGM letterhead if you prefer to have an attorney in the General Counsel's Office sign it.

If you have any questions about this, please contact the General Counsel's Office or Steven Springer (sspringer@voanews.com), the Editor for News Standards & Best Practices.

DEFAMATION/PRIVACY/FALSE LIGHT

Under U.S. law, the central question in an action for defamation or invasion of privacy is whether the statements in question are true or false. Truthful publication or broadcast of matters pertaining to legitimate public interest should generally not expose VOA to liability in the United States, especially if VOA's reporting concerns a public figure.

However, VOA may be liable for invasion of privacy in certain situations for the publicizing of private facts or falsehoods. Not only that, other countries' defamation and "insult" laws are not as protective of the press, so broadcasts that are legal in the U.S. may still expose VOA to liability overseas.

VOA journalists should not intercept or record any private conversations without the permission of the participants, as this may be a crime in certain jurisdictions. The Office of General Counsel should be consulted when a VOA journalist receives intercepted conversations from a third party or in any other special circumstances.
(Also see Recording Telephone Interviews, p. 40)

The following guidance is provided by the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (rcfp.org):

- Check sources thoroughly. Get independent corroboration whenever possible. A source could have a vendetta against the subject and willfully or unintentionally misrepresent the facts for his or her own purposes. Confidential sources may disappear or recant in the face of a lawsuit. Don't rely on someone else to be accurate.
- Do not let your opinion about whether someone is a public figure or official color your decision to verify the accuracy of a story. Juries do not respond favorably to reporters who fail to confront their subjects with defamatory information and provide them with an opportunity to comment.
- If you cover the police or courthouse beat, make certain you understand criminal and civil procedure and terminology. Be especially careful to restate accurately any information obtained about arrests, investigations and judicial proceedings.
- Be cautious when editing. Make sure the story does not convey the wrong information because of a hasty rewrite.
- Watch for headlines and cutlines that might be defamatory even though the text explains the story.
- **Make sure news promos or teasers used to stir audience interest are not misleading or defamatory.**
- **Do not use generic video footage or file photos when reporting on an activity that might be considered questionable.**
- **Just because someone else said it does not mean that a news organization cannot be sued for republishing it.** This includes letters to the editor. Check out any factual allegations contained in them as carefully as you would statements in a news story.
- Be sensitive about using words that connote dishonest behavior, immorality or other undesirable traits, whether in your published story or in comments in your notes. Remember that a judge may order a news organization to produce reporters' notes, drafts and internal memoranda at a libel trial.
- If contacted by someone threatening a libel suit, be polite, but do not admit error or fault. Talk the case over with your editor, supervisor or attorney immediately, and follow procedures established by your news organization.

DO NOT BE RECKLESS WITH THE TRUTH

REPORTER'S PRIVILEGE & CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES

The reporter's privilege originates in the First Amendment's guarantee of a free press, under the rationale that forcing journalists to disclose confidential sources will discourage sources from communicating with reporters, thereby disrupting the free flow of information protected by the First Amendment. In some circumstances, journalists are compelled to disclose confidential sources. Because of USAGM's special status as a federal government agency, some internal VOA documents may also be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

(Also see Sourcing, p. 14)

VOA JOURNALISTS SHOULD CONTACT OGC IF APPROACHED BY ANY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS.

IN SOME SITUATIONS, THIS COULD BE A FIREWALL VIOLATION.

REPORTING ON CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS

A number of laws and regulations, including several criminal statutes, regulate access to, and transmission of, classified information. VOA has a specific protocol in place regarding its reporting on classified documents in the public domain, such as the documents released by WikiLeaks in 2010.

ONLY CERTAIN VOA JOURNALISTS ARE ASSIGNED TO REPORT ON THESE TOPICS.

THE SUPERVISORY INVESTIGATIVE EDITOR SHOULD BE CONSULTED BEFORE YOU BEGIN ANY ASSIGNMENT RELATING IN ANY WAY TO CLASSIFIED MATERIAL, EVEN IF THE CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS ARE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ON A WEBSITE LIKE WIKILEAKS.

THE SUPERVISORY INVESTIGATIVE EDITOR WILL CONSULT WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL REGARDING ALL APPLICABLE LAWS.

SUBPOENAS OR REQUESTS FOR TESTIMONY OR DOCUMENTS

- **IF YOU RECEIVE A REQUEST OR DEMAND TO TESTIFY IN A LEGAL PROCEEDING ON MATTERS RELATING TO OFFICIAL AGENCY INFORMATION OR YOUR OFFICIAL DUTIES, OR IF YOU RECEIVE A REQUEST TO PRODUCE AGENCY RECORDS OR INFORMATION, CONTACT THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL IMMEDIATELY.**

There is a special regulatory procedure for handling requests for testimony by current and former employees and handling the production of documents in legal proceedings in which USAGM is not a named party.
(Also see What Is Not A Firewall Violation, p. 100)

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL BY VOA STAFF

While U.S. government employees must usually obtain a country clearance from the State Department before official government travel abroad, VOA reporters traveling to cover and report on the news may travel to countries in which U.S. Missions are located with minimal formality, which will typically only include a notification of intent to travel to the State Department. Please be mindful that travel to some sanctioned countries may require additional licensing or documentation. Reporters should contact their supervisors and the Travel Office before planning travel to these countries.

OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

FULL-TIME VOA STAFF AND PERSONAL SERVICES CONTRACTORS ARE REQUIRED TO FOLLOW THESE PROCEDURES BEFORE RESPONDING TO A REQUEST OR MAKING ANY COMMITMENTS

USAGM/VOA has written policies that in some cases allow staff and personal services contractors to accept limited outside employment. Management approval is required before undertaking work for anyone other than VOA, however, either for private or government employers. Journalistic best practices may also preclude you from doing outside work, and certain ethics rules may apply as well. You may not do any work for anyone other than VOA without first receiving written approval from VOA.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT GUIDELINES

WORK FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

With few exceptions (e.g. census, postal service), Federal employees are prohibited from working for other Federal Government agencies. This includes work for the executive, legislative and judicial branches and corporations or grantees owned or controlled by the Federal Government (See BAM Title 5-A). Personal Services Contractors may work for other Federal agencies with prior approval of VOA.

WORK FOR PRIVATE EMPLOYERS

Federal employees may work for non-governmental employers. The same restrictions apply regarding written approval **prior** to accepting outside employment whether by federal employees in the private sector or PSCs for any outside employer. Activities are unlikely to be approved if they:

- Constitute a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.
- Involve use of agency materials, time, or facilities.
- Involve a particular matter on which you've worked in an official capacity.
- Are likely to adversely affect the agency's ability to fulfill its mission
- Would involve working for outlets that broadcast to or publish in the same target area as you serve for the agency

Beyond these restrictions, because the highest standards of journalism require a reputation for impartiality, VOA journalists\ should not perform public relations or similar work, either paid or unpaid. Journalists should also not counsel individuals or organizations, either in the United States or abroad, on how to deal successfully with the news media. Lastly, you should not provide advice to government officials other than to those in VOA, USAGM or any other government broadcasting entity, or to candidates for public office, again regardless of whether in the United States or abroad.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT APPROVAL PROCESS

You must obtain approval from your service chief or equivalent supervisor and your division director to make sure your outside employment will not conflict with official duty schedules or requirements. The supervisor provides the agency's primary review in the following three areas.

- The employment does not involve use of agency time, materials, or facilities;
- The amount of time worked outside of VOA is reasonable and will not interfere with your ability to perform your VOA job; and
- Your outside work will not conflict with your official duty schedule.

  For example, approval to work a second job of 35 hours per week is unlikely if the requestor already has a full-time job at VOA. Approval is also unlikely if a shift change is needed to accommodate outside employment.

In performing the analysis above, supervisors should flag for Outside Requests any unusual circumstances, such as an employee seeking outside employment involving a matter she worked on in her official capacity.

Once approved at the service and division levels, requests will be forwarded to OutsideRequests@voanews.com, VOA's Outside Requests committee, which will review requests to ensure they don't violate government ethics regulations or journalistic ethics/best practices.

Outside Requests will review the supervisor's approval for reasonableness and consistency with agency policy, and whether the employment would involve:

- An actual, potential, or appearance of, a conflict of interest.
- Interference with the agency's ability to fulfill its mission
- Working for outlets that broadcast to or publish in the same target area as you serve for the agency

Note that Outside Requests may need specific information from employees to complete a review.

Example 1. A staff employee wants to work for a contractor on a matter that he worked on personally and substantially as a Government employee. Outside Requests will need to know the "what" and "when" of the matter. Sufficient time may have passed to remove any conflict.

Example 2. A PSC wants to work 15 hours per week translating for a Government agency. Which agency? Does the translation involve translating wiretaps, testimonies of criminal defendants, testimonies of witnesses to illegal activity, or other information about a newsworthy story of interest to VOA that will conflict with an employee's job as a VOA journalist?

Even if approval is granted, your outside work will be subject to VOA conflict of interest policies to ensure that VOA's journalistic integrity or impartiality is not compromised by your outside activities.

OUTSIDE PUBLIC APPEARANCES GUIDELINES

Outside speaking, writing and teaching opportunities can be highly beneficial, both personally and professionally, but if not done properly, they can have serious consequences. All FTE and PSC journalists must receive management approval before accepting requests for outside public appearances, including outside teaching, speaking, or writing activities. Federal regulations prohibit federal employees from receiving compensation for outside teaching, speaking, or writing activities that directly relate to their official duties. PSCs should consult Outside Requests if they have an outside public appearance for which they are being offered compensation.

OUTSIDE APPEARANCE APPROVAL PROCESS

FTE and PSC journalists: You must obtain written approval from your service chief or equivalent supervisor to make sure your outside appearance will not conflict with official duty schedules or requirements.
Once approved at the service level, requests will be forwarded to OutsideRequests@voanews.com, which will review requests to ensure they don't violate government ethics regulations or journalistic ethics/best practices.

Even if approval is granted, your public appearance work will be subject to VOA conflict of interest policies to ensure that VOA's journalistic integrity or impartiality is not compromised by your outside activities. In order to avoid appearances of impropriety, if you will be identified as an agency employee in connection with your outside activities, especially regarding outside teaching, speaking, or writing, you must include a disclaimer that the views expressed are your own and not those of VOA, USAGM, or of the U.S. Government, as appropriate.

GUIDELINES FOR NON-PSC CONTRACTORS

Contractors who do not have Personal Service Contracts generally have wider latitude to engage in activities outside the scope of their contracts with the Agency, but they should keep in mind that certain activities and actions could jeopardize continued performance on their current contract, or their ability to obtain a follow-on contract.

Journalists must notify OutsideRequests@voanews.com of any outside appearance that you have accepted before the event occurs. You do not need VOA approval. However, notification assists VOA in advising contractors about activities that may undermine their objectivity as journalists and/or the credibility of the Agency.

When doing work or taking part in an activity outside of VOA, it is important for non-PSC contractors to refrain from stating or creating the impression that they are employees, agents or representatives of the agency. They **should not** say that they "work for" VOA or are "correspondents at" VOA. Rather, they should indicate that they are "freelance journalists," "regular contributors to VOA," or use a similar description.

Non-PSC contractors CANNOT accept requests for outside appearances if those requests conflict with a contractor's duty hours for VOA.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

Aside from the types of activities outlined here, there is also the issue of whether VOA staff and journalists, including all contract journalists, can, or should, express themselves outside of the office.

VOA's mission is to provide accurate and objective news and information. To facilitate that mission, as journalists, you are expected to remain neutral and objective in all public appearances and public spaces, including social media. That means that you should try to avoid conduct or activity that would call into question your neutrality and objectivity as well as the neutrality and objectivity of VOA.

- For example: If as a VOA journalist you are reporting on or otherwise working on a story regarding "X" situation, it is recommended that you avoid publicly voicing your personal opinion about that situation because such activity may call into question your credibility as a journalist and could compromise VOA's reputation as a reliable and credible news organization.

(Also see Social Media, p. 49)

EXERCISE GOOD JUDGMENT WHEN CONSIDERING YOUR OPTIONS AND MAKING YOUR DECISIONS.

COMPETITIONS & CASH AWARDS

Any employee who wants to enter a particular journalism competition using his/her VOA-produced work **must** first advise his/her supervisor. If the supervisor determines the entry to be of merit, please advise Pat Bodnar (pbodnar@voanews.com) in the Language Programming Directorate. All entries should be sent to Percy Rogers, the Agency's Incentive Coordinator (ptrogers@usagm.gov). Percy will compile all entries.

ENTRIES FOR JOURNALISM COMPETITIONS ARE TO BE SUBMITTED BY THE AGENCY'S SENIOR MANAGEMENT ONLY

INDIVIDUAL STAFF MEMBERS SHOULD NOT ENTER COMPETITIONS ON THEIR OWN USING WORK PRODUCED FOR VOA

While the majority of journalism competitions that VOA enters award trophies, plaques or certificates to the winners, a few of them may include cash awards. Should a winning entry result in a cash award, that award will be designated to the agency, **not to the individual.** It will be the responsibility of VOA senior management and/or the Office of General Counsel to determine whether it will accept the cash award under its gift acceptance authority, and how that cash award will be administered.

APPENDICES

PROHIBITED ITEMS

This guidance comes from the Cohen Building Office of Security:

- To keep a safe workplace, the following items are prohibited in the Cohen Building for employees, contractors and visitors: **firearms, weapons, explosives, hazardous chemicals or other destructive devices,** including their individual parts or components, that could cause injury, death or property damage.

- The prohibited items follow the Interagency Security Committee Standard guidelines for prohibited items at Federal facilities and are followed by the Cohen Building's security team.

- Visit the Office of Security SharePoint site for the full list of prohibited items. The site also has a PDF handout that you can email to your guests to inform them about security screening before they visit the building. questions or issues regarding security screening or prohibited items may be address to the USAGM Office of Security at 202-382-7777.

(Also see Security Procedures for Guests, p. 43)

CONTROL ROOM EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

EMERGENCY EVACUATION TV CONTROL ROOM ACTIONS

1. The Director will direct the Producer to tell the anchor to make the statement,
   "**We must interrupt this program, please stand by. We will return as soon as possible**."
2. Director or TD fades to black on anchor and fades up on generic VOA full screen graphic.
3. Director or TD notifies TVMC that an ID graphic is up and that the control room and studio staff are vacating the building.
4. Using the same graphic, TVMC takes control of the path seamlessly when ready.
   TVMC evacuates the building.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION RADIO CONTROL ROOM ACTIONS

1. Producer tells anchor to make the statement,
   "We must interrupt this program, please stand by. We will return as soon as possible."
2. Technician plays VOA1 "The Hits" so that VOA branded content continues standard frequencies.

2a. Alternate: Producer tells anchor to introduce "linked" show. This means all remaining show elements could continue to playout without live inserts until done.

3. Technician links remaining program elements and executes.
4. Technician notifies RMC of programming status.
5. Radio MC takes necessary steps to ensure program continuity.
6. Master Control, Control- room, and studio staff evacuate the building.

EMERGENCY NCC ACTIONS

NCC receives the broadcast product from Master Control and transmits it to the respective distribution points. NCC does not alter the product content sent to them for distribution.

TO IMPLEMENT THE TV CONTROL ROOM PLAN, OPERATIONS MUST

1. Load the TVMC full screen VOA graphic in each TV control room switcher. This may be updated in the future pending further guidance.
2. The Broadcast Operations management is responsible for making sure the graphic is installed in all control rooms and Master Control, and that the emergency plan is communicated to their respective staffs.
3. Broadcast Operations is responsible for maintaining the emergency full screen VOA graphic in their daily operation control room set up, and show programming.

TO IMPLEMENT THE EMERGENCY EVACUATION ACTION PLAN, LANGUAGE SERVICE MANAGEMENT MUST

1. Communicate the emergency action plan to service leadership and staff.
2. Each service must provide to Division management the service action plan for contacting affiliates about disruptions.

ALL LANGUAGE SERVICES AND BROADCAST OPERATIONS STAFF ARE REQUIRED TO EVACUATE THE BUILDING DURING AN EMERGENCY

NOTE: This Emergency evacuation guide for Broadcast Operations and Language Services is for real emergencies, and when there is any doubt please respond as though it is a real emergency.

However, a fire drill is not an emergency. If a fire alarm drill will be conducted, employees and managers will be notified in advance of the testing.

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