

Nov 04, 2016 by *Alvin Snyder*

May Bad-Mouthing Continue: Iran and the Voice of America ^[1]

Each time the Iranian Islamic dictatorship condemns the Voice of America by name for broadcasting news of anti-government demonstrations into that country, it can only mean more dollars for the VOA's Persian News Network — and VOA in general — at budget time on Capitol Hill.

The case can be credibly made that the VOA is a healthy return on investment for U.S. taxpayers when Iran's Foreign Ministry rails that such Western TV channels as the BBC and VOA "are the mouthpiece of their government's public diplomacy." And it's helpful too that the VOA is mentioned in the same breath as the prestigious BBC, which, like the VOA, broadcasts in a language local to Iran. (Also, of course, there is the U.S. government-funded Radio Farda, which broadcasts programs into Iran in Farsi.)

To help circumvent the Iranian government's attempt to block Western TV satellite news broadcasts from getting through, the BBC and VOA began using two additional satellites to make jamming more difficult. But, apparently, signals from those satellites are being effectively blocked as well, along with Internet access. Before satellite and Internet jamming, one Persian News Network broadcast received more than 2,000 Internet messages in one hour.

And for more budget cake frosting, the White House is undoubtedly aware that the VOA's coverage of President Obama's comments on street demonstrations in Iran have been fully "Twittered" within Iran, so the VOA will have picked up valuable recognition from Pennsylvania Avenue's front office along the way.

Because western "public diplomacy" has been labeled a dirty term by Iran's dictators, it's money in the bank as well for the office of the U.S. Under-Secretary for Public Diplomacy when budget hearings on Capitol Hill come around again.

Several hope the name-calling continues, with names spelled properly.

AUTHOR'S ADDENDUM:

Not long after my above blog was posted, Agence France-Presse moved the following newswire from Tehran, reporting that the government of Iran, through its state television, has stepped up its propaganda attack on the VOA and the BBC for helping to instigate the massive protests in Iran (bold emphasis mine):

TEHRAN, Iran, June 23, 2009 (AFP) - Iranian state television broadcast footage on Tuesday of what it said were rioters admitting going on the rampage, inspired by Western media outlets

which have been targeted by the authorities.

"We were under the influence of Voice of America Persia and the BBC," declared one woman, dressed in a black overcoat and headscarf, who said she joined in street violence that erupted during massive opposition protests over the disputed presidential vote.

"The entire atmosphere was created by the BBC. My son had a grenade in his bag as he wanted to appear stronger than others," said the woman, whose face was blurred by the television.

"I took to the streets and saw it was people like us who were torching public properties. There were no police around. It was only us setting cars on fire."

A long-haired young man also acknowledged indulging in violence, and said he had been arrested in a shopping district in the capital known for selling mobile phones.

"I took advantage of the situation and me and my brother looted shops and robbed people," he told the state television reporter.

Iran's foreign ministry on Monday directly accused the two global broadcasters of working for Israel and seeking to break up the Islamic republic with their coverage of the post-election unrest.

Their aim, said foreign ministry spokesman Hassan Ghashghavi, is to weaken the national solidarity, threaten territorial integrity and disintegrate Iran."

Another alleged rioter shown by the state television, an elderly man in a light-green shirt, said: **"I think I was under the influence of VOA."**

Another youngster in a red shirt said he was provoked by "mask-wearing" men.

"I was provoked by their obscene words. They were telling us 'you are fighting Israelis'," he said.

State television has shown brief images of protests, but more footage of what it says is rioting on the streets of Tehran, including the torching of a mosque on Saturday and the beating of a member of the Islamic militia.

It has regularly shown interviews of men and women calling for an end to the violence and complaining about how it is affecting their daily lives.
