

Nov 04, 2016 by [Adam Clayton Powell, III](#)

BBG Proposes Creating New CEO, Editor in Chief ^[1]

WASHINGTON –

All of U.S. international broadcasting could soon report to a new czar at the Broadcasting Board of Governors, under a plan contained in BBG's budget request for FY 2014.

“Included in the budget request is a legislative proposal to establish a Chief Executive Officer for all civilian U.S. international media,” is the way the sixth paragraph of the budget request begins. “The proposal will improve the management and efficiency of BBG operations, helping to mitigate the challenges of a part-time board.”

The proposed position would replace an existing full-time BBG employee - the existing Director position in the U.S. International Broadcasting Bureau. But according to the person in that job, the current IBB Director, Richard Lobo, the new CEO would have far greater power over U.S. international broadcasting than any IBB director has ever had.

“As you know I am a presidential and political appointee so there is a firewall issue,” Lobo explained to me last week during a conference call. He “cannot pick up the phone” and call VOA Director David Ensor or RFE/RL Director Kevin Klose to order changes – including changes in news coverage.

Lobo said the proposed CEO would be able “to pick up the phone” to do just that, because the CEO would not legally be considered a political appointee. Instead, he or she would be selected by the BBG board – who are themselves political appointees.

BBG is asking for Congressional approval before proceeding with the new plan, even as they maintain they do not need any new authority to create the new position.

“We probably could be hiring a CEO right now,” Lobo said. “For the moment, the board is going to wait” for Congress to act.

The new CEO would also have management authority over independent “grantees,” or subcontractors, such as Middle East Broadcasting Networks, which operates Radio Sawa and Alhurra television.

“It’s the intention of this administration and the intent of this [proposed] legislation that the CEO would oversee them,” Lobo said.

I also asked Lobo whether, if the new position were created, he would be a candidate to be the first CEO – especially since, under this plan, his job would be eliminated. After taking some time to prepare his answer, he seemed to decline. But he stopped short of a

Shermanesque statement, instead expressing an institutional view.

“This is a very, very key objective of this [BBG] board and this administration,” he said.
