

## LETTER SENT TO PRESIDENT BUSH

March 26, 2001

The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

I felt bound in conscience to call the following urgent matter to your attention. It may well be something already brought before you but, if not, then I think you may at least want to give it some consideration. I have written Senator Helms, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, a similar letter.

I and many of my ex-colleagues who worked with me in both the Voice of America and at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty are worried about something which may be happening at the BBG (Broadcast Board of Governors, I believe is what they now call new successors to old management structures at the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and other U.S. international broadcasters) and RFE/RL. These two entities, the BBG and RFE/RL, may be acting to close the U.S. short-wave transmitting facility located on the Costa Brava, in Platja de Pals, north of Barcelona, in Spain. Many of us think this would be a huge mistake on the part of the United States Government, at least in the near term. The Russians, of course, will be absolutely delighted when they hear the news.

During the entire Cold War, Mr. President, when the Russians were successfully jamming all other American stations, signals from our transmitters located in Pals consistently were able to cut through the jamming efforts of the USSR to deliver a message of freedom to the people of Russia. It was from this Radio Liberty station, with 1,500,000 watts of power banging right through Russian jamming, that the people of the old USSR first learned of the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986. That their own government would hide such devastating news from them underscored for that nation in what low regard the Communist leadership held their own population. Many experts agree that the start of the fall of the USSR totalitarian state can be traced back to this very broadcast.

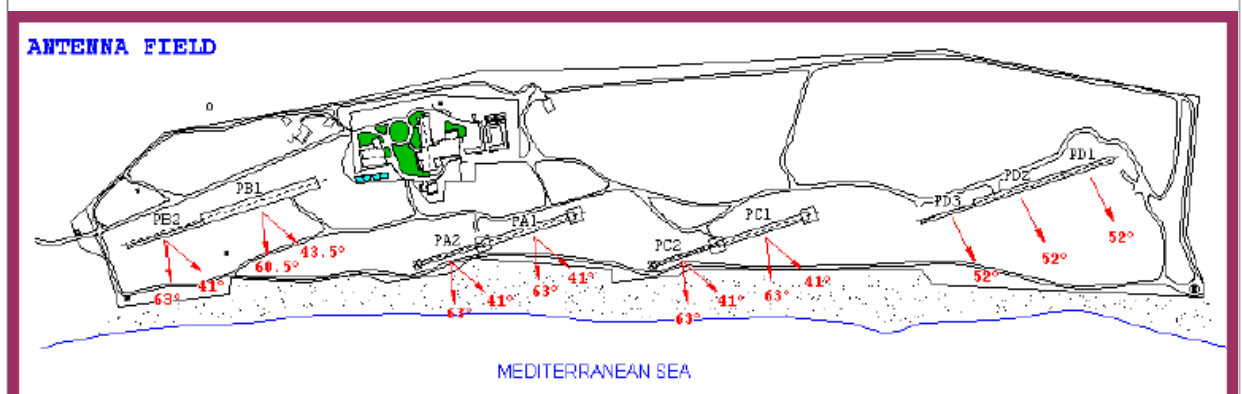
The Platja de Pals location of this station, Mr. President, is a very special one indeed. This precise spot was chosen by top U.S. short-wave experts of the time because:

- a) It's position relative to Moscow was such that an extremely powerful **one-hop** radio signal could be delivered smack-dab into that city by high power transmitters located in **Platja de Pals**.
- b) An additional, **BRILLIANTLY** thought-out benefit was that, after striking Moscow, this same radio signal would once again bounce from earth to ionosphere and back down in another part of that **SAME Russian-speaking** continent. And it would continue to do this through the many, many time zones that cover the Russian continent! Admittedly, the signal would grow a tad weaker with each succeeding hop, but history has shown that even these weaker signals were always strong enough to deliver America's message to the oppressed peoples of the old USSR. This very special characteristic was one of the main reasons the Russians could never successfully jam the **Platja de Pals** station during the entire Cold War Years while, at the same time, enjoying considerable success against other U.S. broadcast facilities. With these, the Russians merely had to locate one jammer in the prime reception area and never had to worry about second signal hops striking any other place of import. In most cases, second hops from every other station were striking in the North Sea or in other uninhabited areas.
- c) There is only one other physical location in Western Europe which offered the identical site characteristics sought by our OSS experts of the time and that, it is said, was **Paris, France**. Needless to say, building a U.S. transmitter station under the Eiffel Tower was never an option.
- d) To take complete advantage of the perfect location presented by the **Platja de Pals** site, U.S. engineering experts also installed four 250 kilo-Watt short-wave transmitters, ingeniously arranged so they could operate as individual transmitters, could be combined into a pair of 500 kilo-Watt transmitters, or all four paralleled units could be run as a single super-power 1.0 mega-Watt transmitter.



These four units, when combined as a million-watt transmitter, could be tied into the largest short-wave antenna in the U.S. inventory, a gigantic, ultra high-gain 4 x 8-stack array, arranged on eight towers, four of which are over 500-feet high with antenna curtain widths reaching nearly the length of a football field. A truly imposing sight as seen on beautiful beach property on the Balearic Sea roughly 60 miles north of Barcelona.

The station is run by one American with a staff of Spanish nationals, numbering less than 40, on a 24-hour, 7-day schedule. The station, whose physical plant was turned over to the Spanish Government and is now leased back from them as part of the agreement which permits our continued operation there, occupies an 82.44 acre plot of unobstructed beachfront property on the Mediterranean Sea. Facilities housed on the property include manager's office, administration, transmitter operations, power plant, motor pool, antenna maintenance shop, carpentry, paint and masonry shops, plus other minor buildings which hold such things as RF-line switch bay, dummy-load, water system, etc.



In addition to the 4-transmitter and super antenna system described above, the Pals station also includes two other 250 kilowatt short-wave transmitters, a computer-driven antenna switch matrix, and three other large curtain arrays comprising six more antennas. The drawing above gives a good bird's eye-view of the entire 80-acre complex.

President Bush, my concerns are based on the fact that in recent years, all of the "Cold War Warriors" have retired and the **BBG** and **RFE/RL** administrators are relatively young individuals who, though probably outstanding, are of an age where they may not fully appreciate what went on from 1945 until 1990, the era of that gigantic struggle between East and West known as the "Cold War". I fear current administrators likely do not remember what international broadcasting was like during that period when the United States worked assiduously to reach and give hope to peoples oppressed by Communist regimes and those same regimes waged constant warfare to keep us from reaching their people with the truth. Indeed, when the Cold War ended, Communist leaders like **Boris Yeltsin** of Russia, **Vaclav Havel** of the Czech Republic, and **Lech Walesa** of Poland stated that it was broadcasts from Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, not bombs and guns, which caused the final defeat of Communist regimes in their respective countries. As a matter of fact, in those waning hours of the Commie dictatorship in the USSR, when **Gorbachev** was being held prisoner in his dacha on the Black Sea and **Yeltsin** was surrounded by firing tanks in the "Russian White House", it was a **Radio Liberty** microphone which carried **Yeltsin's** voice, through our transmitters in **Platja de Pals**, to the Russian people in Moscow and throughout Russia asking them to resist those who would continue to imprison them. The rest is history.

Today, as more and more access has opened up to those very audiences we fought so hard to keep informed during the Cold War, the more RFE/RL's current crop of administrators, many who came of age during the computer era, are shying away from using short-wave and are placing more and more resources and **more and more reliance** into such things as the Internet and so-called "Affiliates"---radios, mostly FM, leased from private parties **inside** those countries of interest. To fund these enterprises, money is being drained away from short-wave operations. This may be well and good as applies to such countries as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, the newest members of NATO. At the same time one has to wonder **just how necessary** such broadcasts are

anymore to people who now, theoretically at least, have open access to CNN, MSNBC, CNBC, BBC, Sky Channel stations, etc.

Russia, on the other hand, is a completely different deal. To be sure, it has opened up considerably since the end of the "Cold

War" and both Radio Liberty and Voice of America are pursuing aggressive policies of acquiring more and more "affiliates" and providing wider Internet access across Russia. Some of this "openness", I believe, is mostly eye-wash intended as a sop to Americans who provide most of Russia's hard currency loans. Russia's government, nevertheless, keeps a sharp watch on what goes on in that nation and it is widely known that freedom of the press continues stifled. Unlike other nations which were our former enemies during the Cold War, Russia continues to maintain a large standing army, one larger than ours; a blue-sea navy as large or larger than ours; a huge rocket force featuring hundreds of nuclear-tipped missiles; an infrastructure in decay; and a political system in no way synchronized with our own.

Everyone knows Russia's government can slam closed the door to outside access at a moment's notice and "affiliate radios" and internet hubs inside its borders can be shut down even faster at the threat of any serious crisis, perhaps even as small as the current spy hubbub. For that reason, and that reason alone, we cannot let the BBG and RFE/RL compromise the United States' ability to reach Russian audiences from OUTSIDE its borders by closing the station which, almost single-handedly, helped the U.S. win its propaganda wars against the USSR.

President Bush, should you decide to look into this matter---and I hope you or someone on your staff will find time to do so---you will hear how the **Platja de Pals** station can be closed because Russian audiences can be reached from U.S.-operated stations in Morocco and Greece. This is true but never with the power and stability that the **Platja de Pals** station affords. Experts in the field of RF propagation can confirm this for you. Neither Greece nor Morocco can provide the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>,

etc. hop coverage afforded by the **Pals** station. Both can be easily jammed, and neither can generate the amount of RF power **Pals** can nor do they possess the 8-stack, high-gain antenna the United States has available in Spain. The location of **Pals'** antennas---built practically inside the sea with a flat, salt-water vista in front of them---provides proven superior signal launching capabilities not available at other U.S. sites.

The immediate danger, of course, is that the valuable, beautiful, and "**grand-fathered**" beachfront property occupied by the **Platja de Pals** station, once released, will be quickly converted into swank tourist hotels, something the area government has been advocating for years. Far better it would be for our country---if pressure is mounting to save money---that some other facility, or facilities, be chosen for closure in place of **Platja de Pals**.

President Bush, the good people at the BBG and RFE/RL, as well as those in the IBB engineering group which technically supports both the VOA and RFE/RL, may have every good reason in the world for closing this valuable and irreplaceable station, however, I think that you, your NSC staff, the State Department, and the Congress should be made completely satisfied that this is the proper action for our country. It would be terrible if well-intentioned, but inexperienced personnel, were to err in a way that could injure U.S. ability to conduct its foreign policy.

Tendered for your information and consideration, I remain-

Sincerely and respectfully yours,

(Letter from Former Manager of RL Pals)

Sent by U.S. Mail and Fax

[CLOSE WINDOW](#)