



In the face of heightened globalization and with the U.S. engaged in two wars, many mainstream news organizations have turned their backs on foreign news. Newspapers and television networks alike provide much less of it. Many outlets have shuttered overseas bureaus. But a handful of promising startups offer some hope for the future.

Retreating from the World

By Jodi Enda

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uring more than two decades at the Chicago Tribune, Colin McMahon reported from bureaus in Mexico City, Moscow, Baghdad and Buenos Aires. He served as foreign editor, directing a cadre of correspondents as they covered the invasion of Iraq, the war in Afghanistan, the Palestinian uprising. He was dispatched to Jerusalem for six months. It was a heady life of globe-trotting that not only allowed him to be a witness to history, but to bring stories from the far corners of the globe home to readers in America's third-largest city, readers who live in Chicago's distinctively ethnic neighborhoods, who often have intensely close ties to far-flung places and who might not get such a rich diet of news—breaking or enterprise—were it not for Colin McMahon.

Now McMahon goes by the title of "national content editor." Once again he oversees the Tribune's foreign news operation. This time, however, McMahon does not direct a staff of foreign correspondents.

The paper has none.

The Chicago Tribune, like many other newspapers, eliminated its storied foreign bureaus during the last decade's repeated rounds of belt tightening. Instead of overseeing reporters in the field and helping to shape articles that will form a unique international report, McMahon runs a desk that receives foreign and national stories from the Tribune's largest sister paper, the Los Angeles Times. His staff then picks some of those stories, edits them, trims them if need be and places them alongside wire service reports to create nation/world "modules" for the Chicago Tribune and six other Tribune Co. papers.

"We take the content and we edit it here and add info-boxes, graphics and other material," McMahon explains. "So we are the central editing and design house for seven Tribune Company newspapers. We send it fully designed. They drop it in."

Each day, McMahon feeds three to five foreign stories in prefab modules to the Tribune, the Baltimore Sun, the Orlando Sentinel and Fort Lauderdale's Sun-Sentinel—all of which used to have foreign bureaus—as well as the Hartford Courant, the Morning Call in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and the Daily Press in Newport News, Virginia. Rarely do any of those stories land on a front page. That would complicate the module. If he has big news, McMahon creates a refer, a potentially sizable box that summarizes the story on page one and directs interested readers to the appropriate page inside.

Modules. Content editor. Central editing and design house. Intentionally or not, Tribune Co. has hit upon the perfect words

to describe a modern, industrialized, assembly line approach to foreign (and sometimes national) news. And while the chain's particular method of providing identical pages for a variety of papers might not be the national norm, its pared-down vision of foreign reporting is.

Eighteen newspapers and two chains have shuttered every one of their overseas bureaus in the dozen years since AJR first surveyed foreign coverage for the Project on the State of the American Newspaper (see "Goodbye, World," November 1998). All but two of them eliminated their last bureau sometime after 2003, the year the United States invaded Iraq and the last time AJR conducted the survey. Many other papers and chains reduced their coterie of foreign correspondents, meticulously choosing which bureaus to close. What's more, an untold number of regional and local papers have dramatically decreased the amount of foreign news they publish. Television networks, meanwhile, slashed the time they devote to foreign news and narrowed their focus largely to war zones.

Remarkably, NPR is the only mainstream media organization that serves up a heartier foreign report, with more bureaus and correspondents than in the past, to a chiefly American-based audience, according to the survey. While Bloomberg News also has opened more foreign bureaus, a majority of the terminals where their stories appear are overseas. The "big four" national newspapers—the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post and Los Angeles Times—all continue to have vibrant foreign reports, though each has closed some foreign bureaus in recent years.

As the mainstream media steadily retrench, a mix of start-ups has stepped in to help fill the news vacuum. With fellowships, grants and freelance contracts, new entries into the foreign-news business are providing alternatives for journalists intent on reporting from overseas, for editors who need to augment their reports and for readers looking to supplement the now-limited offerings of newspapers and television stations.

There is no pretending they can completely make up for the formerly dynamic coverage in many national and regional outlets.

In closing all their outposts abroad, a number of newspapers—most notably the Boston Globe, Newsday, the Philadelphia Inquirer and some Tribune Co. papers—put an end to long, much heralded traditions of delivering foreign news in their own way to their own readers, of covering patches of the globe that their audiences had a particular, sometimes singular, interest in. They covered breaking news and big stories,

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROY KARTEN AND TORI SOPER

to be sure. But, perhaps more often, correspondents from these papers were ahead of the news or off it completely, telling stories about interesting people, places and customs that you just couldn't read anywhere else.

They had passports. They wandered. And they took their readers with them.

Many editors say that kind of reporting was a luxury. Now, with some noteworthy exceptions, it is a relic, gone the way of paper tape and the pica pole. Unlike those artifacts of days past, foreign bureaus were not replaced by new technology. They were not replaced at all.

Colin McMahon and his counterparts across the country have learned to make do. Rarely do they contend they are doing more with less, the can-do mantra of the early years of budget cuts. They merely do the best they can.

McMahon is one of the lucky ones. He has his pick of stories produced by L.A. Times foreign correspondents and relies less on wire services than his counterparts at many midsize papers. He might not have his own staff of reporters, but most readers are unlikely to know the difference. It could be worse.

"I'm happy with a lot of the things that we do," McMahon says. "I'm happy with this approach. It's easy for the reader and it makes a lot of sense for the new reality."

"I'm not happy with the new reality, though. I think this is the best solution, but I wish it were 2004 again, when I was a foreign correspondent. I don't think there's anybody at this newspaper, including the editor, who wouldn't want 13 foreign correspondents."

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on Sawyer was less accepting of the "new reality."

Sawyer had long been the Washington bureau chief for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, but he made his name reporting and writing major projects from distant shores. By his count, he traveled to five dozen countries, many more than once and for weeks at a time, during three decades as a newspaper reporter.

"There were a number of big, regional papers that were determined to have their own voice and report on global issues," Sawyer recalls now. "That was changing, and changing quite rapidly, in the early 2000s."

The swift decline and, in some cases, wholesale disappearance of original foreign reporting at some of the nation's premier papers created a yawning journalistic void. Increasingly, big-city newspapers relied solely on wire services to provide foreign news. Space tightened again and again. Local, local, local became louder, louder, louder. No longer did papers have the space to run fascinating yarns about how people lived in remote, little-known villages thousands of miles away. They barely had the staff necessary to cover their own backyards. Neither did they have the resources to develop foreign stories

that were not only interesting but also important—stories that might explain a culture or a country in ways that either foretold or underscored key global developments in places like Pakistan, China or Congo.

So when the Pulitzer family sold the Post-Dispatch and 13 other newspapers to Lee Enterprises in 2005 (see "Lee Who?" June/July 2005), Sawyer—fresh from reporting in the Middle East—decided to chart a new course. He asked Emily Rauh Pulitzer, the wealthy widow of newspaper magnate Joseph Pulitzer Jr., for seed money to allow him to build a program that would support the kind of international stories the Post-Dispatch and other papers seldom would produce.

The idea, Sawyer says, was to help finance reporters—young Jon Sawyers, if you will—who would go overseas for weeks at a time and produce in-depth projects for regional newspapers and broadcast outlets. His hope, Sawyer says, was that once reporters produced one or two such stories with help from outside, they would be able to make the case that their employers should pay for future projects themselves. In that way, the money would have a ripple effect.

Enter the nonprofit Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting (see "Funding for Foreign Forays," February/March 2008).

Sawyer is one of a handful of journalists trying to step into the foreign news breach with inventive and varied upstarts. John Schidlovsky is another. He founded the nonprofit International Reporting Project to finance foreign reporting in 1998—when he began to witness what then was a gradual decline in international coverage—but has expanded and shifted the center's course to meet the changing needs of journalists. A newer addition to the mix is Philip Balboni, who in January 2009 launched GlobalPost, a for-profit Internet venture that pays freelance reporters based overseas for regular submissions to its round-the-clock news report. (See "Foreign Affairs," April/May 2008.)

None of these endeavors replicates the old model of hiring reporters, paying them a living wage, providing them benefits, sending them and their families overseas with generous expense accounts and housing allowances and interpreters and "fixers," and dedicating prime real estate in the paper or on nightly newscasts to their reports. Whether those days are over or simply on hiatus at most media outlets is anyone's guess. The new models—for-profit and non—require journalists to be more resourceful and nimble to make a (frequently modest) living, patching together freelance gigs and travel grants that allow them to report from overseas.

The organizations founded by Sawyer, Schidlovsky and Balboni have become the beneficiaries of the great migration of reporters from daily newspapers. Each of their organizations has been inundated with entreaties from foreign correspondents who have left the news organizations that they feel abandoned them or, perhaps more to the point, their readers. "These are really talented people who have many years of working for major newspapers behind them," says Schidlovsky.



Jon Sawyer launched the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting when he saw that foreign coverage was declining at U.S. news organizations.

ROY KARTEN

"They could still be working for the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune, the Philadelphia Inquirer, if those papers didn't downsize."

Even some reporters who remain at papers that have a foreign presence, including the New York Times and Washington Post, occasionally seek outside funding for specific projects that their papers wouldn't otherwise undertake, say Schidlovsky and Sawyer. Both of their organizations, which underwrite individual projects, have partnered with reporters from large papers to produce stories with foreign datelines. The Washington, D.C.-based International Reporting Project has worked with journalists from "almost every organization in the country," says Schidlovsky, himself a former foreign correspondent for the Baltimore Sun.

Both the IRP and the Pulitzer Center prefer to finance journalists working on stories that are unlikely to be reported elsewhere, often in developing and under-covered parts of the world. The need is great. Schidlovsky says he receives 300 applications for about 40 grants a year. Since he founded it a dozen years ago, he says, the program has sent 174 reporters overseas to a total of 92 countries, for five weeks at a time, and given them another four weeks to work on their projects in Washington. It has sent 156 senior editors to foreign countries for two weeks of intensive learning.

When he started the IRP, Schidlovsky intended to provide lengthy training—and kind of a mini-master's degree—to reporters who were employed by newspapers and hoped to become traditional foreign correspondents. But as one paper after another closed foreign bureaus, he realized he needed not only to teach reporters how to work overseas, but to get them there—fast. Few applicants to his program could afford to spend an entire semester learning about international reporting. They had to just do it.

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hil Balboni has a wholly different approach. He doesn't send journalists overseas; instead, he pays reporters who have traveled abroad on their own dimes to write for him.

The founder and past president of New England Cable News (see *Broadcast Views*, October 2002), Balboni was dissatisfied with foreign news coverage long before the latest cutbacks. As many as four decades ago and throughout what most people regard as the zenith of international news, he judged the range and variety of stories as "modest, at best, and insufficient." In 2006 and 2007, he wrote a business plan for an Internet-based foreign news service that he hoped would make a profit and meet what by then had become a gaping need. Ultimately, Balboni raised \$10 million from wealthy investors, including Ben Taylor, former publisher of the Boston Globe.

Nearly two years ago, Balboni and Executive Editor Charles Sennott—a former foreign correspondent for the Globe—launched GlobalPost. In October of this year, the site had 1,278,000 unique visitors, Balboni says.

GlobalPost produces a wide-ranging daily foreign report of relatively short stories written each month by 100 to 120 reporters who have planted themselves around the globe and support themselves with freelance gigs. None of the writers will get rich working for the Boston-based enterprise, which pays them \$250 for stories of 600 to 800 words. The 50 or 60 reporters who are on contract to write at least one story a week also receive shares of stock in the privately owned company. Larger projects and video reports command higher prices, Balboni says. Despite the low pay, he says, there are more journalists who want to write for the Web site than it can accommodate.

"We can present a fantastic smorgasbord of reporting that is interesting and important but that is not on the agenda of AP," says Philip Balboni, founder of the online foreign news startup GlobalPost.

"Most of the people writing for us are seasoned journalists," Balboni says, reaffirming Schidlovsky's experience. "They are committed to being in a place for a substantial period of time."

Unlike the nonprofit outfits, GlobalPost earns most of its money through advertising. It also syndicates its content to newspapers, Web sites, radio stations and television networks in the United States and abroad, Balboni says. A third source of revenue is membership, which costs \$2.95 a month or \$29.95 a year. Though most parts of [globalpost.com](#) can be accessed at no cost, the nearly 600 readers who have signed up to be members are privy to additional content. They also get to vote, once a week, on a story they'd like to read. The top vote-getter then is ordered up from a GlobalPost reporter.

Balboni views his as an all-purpose site, with news and features that touch on most of the big stories going on in the world. He boasts that he has readers not only in the United States, but in almost every country in the world.

Says Balboni, "We can present a fantastic smorgasbord of reporting that is interesting and important but that is not on the agenda of AP."

Jon Sawyer is not enamored of the smorgasbord approach. Smorgasbords, after all, are speedy, inexpensive and, well, their fare generally cools quickly.

Tall and graying, Sawyer sits with his back to a window six floors above Massachusetts Avenue in Washington's chic Dupont Circle neighborhood. He is surrounded by mementos of his years on the road, photos and knickknacks from the glory days of late 20th century American journalism. Yet he is not living in the past, pining for what he (and many others) refer to as "the golden era." His computer screen is evidence of his adroit transition to the 21st century.

Sawyer adjusts his mouse and clicks to proudly display project after project financed by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, which in nearly five years has amassed an annual budget upward of \$1.7 million. The center produces 50 to 60 projects a year, far fewer than GlobalPost. That's OK with Sawyer. His are stories that dig deeply into the kind of issues generally ignored by the mainstream media: a child bride's

struggles in Sudan, birth control in rural India, Maoist insurgents in Nepal, disappearing wetlands in China. "We're not interested in covering things that are going to get covered" by other outlets, Sawyer says.

It's an impressive display. Yet the center didn't work out the way Sawyer planned. "Unfortunately, the pace of retreat from media outlets was astounding," he says. "When I started the Pulitzer Center, the Post-Dispatch, the Inquirer, the big regional papers were what I thought would be my big platform. For the most part I was wrong. They no longer have foreign editors. There's no budget for freelancers. There's no space in the papers."

Like Schidlovsky at the IRP, Sawyer had to alter his approach. Rather than partner with regional papers, he works more often with more nationally focused outlets, including the Washington Post, The Atlantic, PBS' "NewsHour." He offers travel grants directly to journalists and works with them to place their stories. The grants typically run from \$3,000 to \$10,000 but are sometimes substantially larger. More than three-quarters of the reporters he finances are freelancers, Sawyer says.

That "new reality"—most of the journalists he backs don't have regular paychecks—has prompted Sawyer to find ways to give them small stipends and to help them market their work. The reporters come up with ideas and submit brief proposals that contain budget estimates, placement plans and descriptions about the long-term value of each project. That last point is critical: Sawyer wants stories that have a shelf life.

The Pulitzer Center also expects reporters to blog from the field while working on their projects. The blogs keep the Web site fresh and also give the center's staff ammunition to place upcoming projects in traditional media outlets. That, after all, is the goal. Sawyer wants projects that will be published and reproduced far beyond the center's Web site. So he and his full-time staff of nine (plus four interns) peddle the stories, primarily to newspapers and television outlets, which typically pay the reporters small amounts for their work.

The center expands its reach with an educational component, something Sawyer describes as part marketing, part journalism, part consciousness raising in the sense that it enhances students' awareness of and interest in critical global issues. The Global Gateway program sends journalists to classrooms across the country to discuss their Pulitzer Center

SHRINKING FOREIGN COVERAGE

To get a sense of the amount of foreign news in U.S. newspapers, AJR selected two papers from each of the four Census-designated regions of the country: the Northeast, Midwest, South and West. We then randomly selected seven dates between January and June, making sure to include each day of the week. Using microfilm and hard copies, we looked through the entire edition of each newspaper and counted the number of foreign stories. Foreign stories included hard news, features, editorials, columns and, generally, travel stories. We included stories with domestic bylines if they focused on foreign events or issues.

The papers we chose were the Philadelphia Inquirer, Providence Journal, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Cincinnati Enquirer, Tampa Tribune, Dallas Morning News, Fresno Bee and Portland's Oregonian.

The findings? A drastic decline in the amount of foreign news. Over the past quarter-century, foreign news in the dailies examined by AJR fell by 53 percent, with the largest drop coming in

the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. That paper printed three-fourths fewer foreign stories in 2010 than in 1985. The Dallas Morning News had the smallest drop in foreign stories among the eight, printing one-fifth fewer.

The percentage of staff-produced foreign stories in the eight papers also fell sharply, from 15 percent in 1985 to 4 percent in 2010.

When newspapers printed foreign news in 1985, they were more likely to go longer, with stories more than 400 words outnumbering shorter pieces by nearly two to one. And although this year's foreign stories were still more likely to be longer, the ratio narrowed.

Foreign news never played a starring role on the front page of these dailies. In 1985, 9 percent of foreign stories appeared on page 1, compared with only 6 percent in 2010.

Research for this chart was conducted by Priya Kumar.

1985	Total Stories	Editorials and Op/Eds	Less than 400 words	More than 400 words	Staff-written	Other sources	Page 1	Notes
Philadelphia Inquirer	101	12	30	71	26	75	15	
Providence Journal	75	16	26	49	13	63	7	*One story listed staff and wire services
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	92	20	47	45	15	76	8	*One story had no byline, so unsure of source
Cincinnati Enquirer	57	12	27	30	7	51	5	*One story listed staff and wire services
Dallas Morning News	75	11	34	41	18	57	6	
Tampa Tribune	96	18	27	69	4	93	8	*One story listed staff and wire services
The Oregonian	115	11	27	88	11	104	8	
Fresno Bee	78	13	36	42	8	70	6	
TOTAL	689	113	254	435	102	589	63	
2010								
Philadelphia Inquirer	62	4	16	46	2	60	6	
Providence Journal	38	8	16	22	2	36	0	
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	24	5	6	18	3	21	4	
Cincinnati Enquirer	33	3	18	15	0	33	0	
Dallas Morning News	59	0	31	28	4	55	6	
Tampa Tribune	33	2	25	8	1	32	1	
The Oregonian	41	2	10	31	2	39	1	
Fresno Bee	31	1	13	18	0	31	1	
TOTAL	321	25	135	186	14	307	19	

projects with middle school, high school and university students. In some cases, the journalists mentor students who are working on video projects of their own. In others, they help teachers draw links between global and local issues. The goal is to build a larger audience for international news, now and for the future, and to provide the reporters with additional income in the form of honoraria.

The Pulitzer Center, born five years ago out of one man's desire to salvage the kind of international reporting that his newspaper used to pursue, has financed the projects of 180 journalists and worked to place them in outlets all over the country. It is but one response to the "new reality," one way to try to bridge the foreign news gap.

"Things are lost," Sawyer says, "and things are gained."

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common refrain among editors whose papers have cut foreign reporting is that not only is it outrageously expensive, it can—thanks largely to the Internet—be found elsewhere. In other words, not all that much is lost.

"There are still a lot of places where you can read that kind of coverage," says Arnie Robbins, editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, whose paper seldom sends reporters overseas anymore—just as Sawyer foresaw. "You can read it all online. So even though there are fewer voices out there, it's more accessible."

But in the next breath, Robbins points to one of the flaws in that line of thinking: "Many editors would say—I would say—we're concerned about the lack of voices in foreign coverage. When you have fewer voices, you're concerned not about the accuracy, but the context."

It's true that anyone eager to read anything about nearly anyplace in the world can do so online. If your local paper doesn't carry enough foreign news to satisfy you, you can read the New York Times, either in the flesh or on the Web. Or the Washington Post, or the Los Angeles Times or the Wall Street Journal or one of several specialized publications, such as Foreign Policy. You can peruse [globalpost.com](#) or [pulitzer-center.org](#) or [internationalreportingproject.org](#). You can go to the Web sites of countless international policy foundations and nonprofits, international institutes and university programs and read what their experts are up to. And you can read oh-so-many foreign newspapers, conveniently translated into English by high-tech wizardry. Foreign news really does abound.

If you look for it.

But how many people do that?

W. Joseph Campbell, a former foreign correspondent who teaches international journalism and media at American University, says many people don't go the extra length to seek

out foreign news if it's not in front of them, either on the front page of their newspaper or on the nightly TV newscast. They take the easy route; they go "news-less."

"If you really are enthralled by, fascinated by, a particular topic internationally, it's easier than ever to find good, solid reporting," Campbell says. However, he continues, "You're more likely to find a serendipitous story, one you weren't looking for but find compelling, in a newspaper than online."

In other words, people who are especially engaged by another country or steeped in an international issue can and will find lots of stuff about it if they look online. The casual newspaper reader or television viewer, on the other hand, the person who doesn't Google Phnom Penh or Nairobi or nuclear nonproliferation, is less likely to trip across a story that catches his or her eye, less likely than before to accidentally discover something new and interesting about a place. Less likely to come upon that old-fashioned yarn.

And there are consequences.

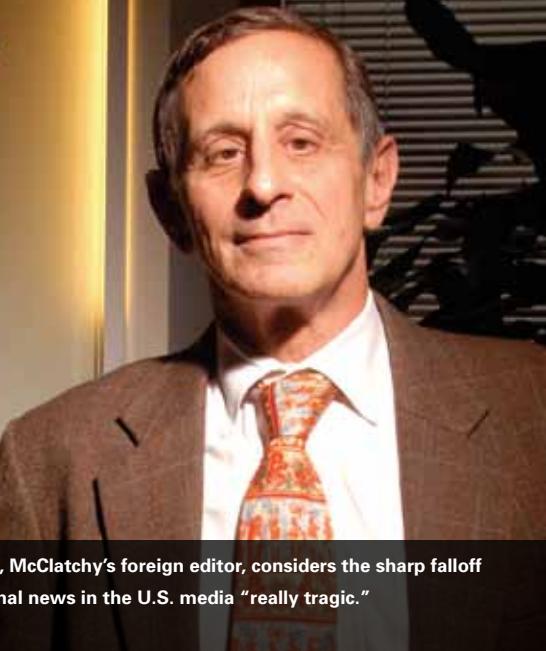
The Internet, says Leslie H. Gelb, president emeritus and board senior fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations, is "no substitute" for solid, in-country reporting by experienced, unbiased journalists. Foreign reporting, he says, is essential to an informed electorate as well as to the development of foreign policy.

"You can say, 'What the devil difference does it make?' The difference that it makes is that the United States is still the most important country in the world," says Gelb, formerly a reporter and editor for the New York Times and a senior official for the State and Defense departments. "Even China will say that America is the leader on any international issue. The interested public in America absolutely has to have reliable information about what's going on in all those countries. Otherwise, our leaders do dumb things, and the American people never know about it. It's just that important."

"Just look at getting into Iraq or into Afghanistan," he says. "There were very few people who knew these countries who could tell us what it would be like once the boots were on the ground there, what we would be running into. We developed that capacity after the fact....You need reporters on the ground who know those places who can do the reporting. It's very unlikely to come from papers in those countries. That's not their tradition, particularly in Asia."

Stephen Hess, senior fellow emeritus at the Brookings Institution, is of the same mind. It is a "great tragedy," he says, when news outlets close their foreign bureaus. Even the organizations that still send reporters overseas often concentrate almost exclusively on war coverage. "Take away places where Americans are fighting, and it's even more pathetic a picture," Hess says.

Indeed, an AJR report in the summer of 2002 revealed that, after the terrorist attacks of the previous year, newspapers beefed up their foreign coverage, sent more reporters abroad and devoted more space to international stories than at any



Roy Gutman, McClatchy's foreign editor, considers the sharp falloff in international news in the U.S. media "really tragic."

time since the Cold War.

"The two stories dominating the foreign report, Afghanistan and the Middle East, are certainly filled with bombs and disaster. Those two stories are eating most of the space allotted for foreign news, even if that space has increased somewhat since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon," Stephen Seplow wrote more than eight years ago (see "Closer to Home," July/August 2002). "Those caveats aside, there does seem to be a new acceptance of the notion that what happens abroad affects local readers as residents of the world's most important country. It deserves good play. And more space should be devoted to it.

"How long will this last?" Seplow asked. "The general consensus: The appetite for foreign news will remain hearty for some time; it will slowly dissipate, but it is not likely to become anemic again in the foreseeable future."

In hindsight, those post-9/11 years appear to have been a blip.

Just six years after that story appeared in AJR, the Project for Excellence in Journalism reported in July 2008 that international news was "rapidly losing ground at rates greater than any other topic area." According to the PEJ report, "The Changing Newsroom," 64 percent of newsroom executives said that in the previous three years, their papers had reduced the amount of space apportioned to foreign news. And 46 percent said they set aside fewer resources to cover foreign stories. Just 10 percent considered foreign coverage "very essential," the report said.

During the Cold War, newspapers and television stations saw a distinct need to cover foreign news, particularly from the Soviet Union and Europe, Hess says. When the Iron Curtain ceased to exist about two decades ago, "that was a good excuse for cutting back," he says.

Airtime on the three major networks illustrates the shift. In 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell, ABC, CBS and NBC devoted a combined 4,828 minutes to international news, according to

a tally by the Tyndall Report, which monitors network broadcasts. By 2000, after more than a decade of steady decline, the three networks aired only 2,127 minutes of international news during newscasts that totaled between 14,500 and 16,000 minutes, the Tyndall Report says.

Foreign coverage by the networks increased with the terrorist attacks in 2001, and reached a peak in 2006, with 3,059 minutes of international news. Last year, despite the United States' involvement in two wars, the networks allotted only 2,070 minutes to foreign news—less than they had during the relative calm of 2000.

During the first 10 months of 2010, coverage has increased somewhat, to 2,247 minutes. Andrew Tyndall, publisher of the report that bears his name, attributes the uptick this year to two events: the Haitian earthquake and the rescue of Chilean miners.

Not only are the networks devoting less time to foreign news, the reports they do air emanate less often from their bureaus and more frequently from reporters who parachute in to cover specific stories. This doesn't bother Tyndall, who attributes the shift to improved technology and travel, which make it easier for reporters both to move around the globe and to transmit stories than in decades past.

"If you're going to cover Haiti, does it matter if you're sending someone from the Mexico City bureau or from Miami?" Tyndall asks. "You send them down to Chile, does it really matter what airport they left from to get there? Even in the heyday of foreign news coverage, there were vast areas of the world where they didn't have a bureau."

For the past few years, NBC has dedicated more time to international news than its competitors. In 2009, for instance,

SHUTTERED BUREAUS

The following newspapers and newspaper companies have eliminated their foreign bureaus since AJR began a series of surveys of international coverage in 1998.

- Baltimore Sun
- Boston Globe
- Boston Herald
- Chicago Tribune
- Copley Newspapers
- Cox Newspapers
- Ft. Lauderdale's Sun-Sentinel
- Fort Worth Star-Telegram
- Miami Herald
- Newark's Star-Ledger
- New Orleans' Times-Picayune
- New York Post
- Newsday
- Orange County Register
- Orlando Sentinel
- Philadelphia Inquirer
- St. Petersburg Times
- San Francisco Chronicle
- San Jose Mercury News
- Washington Times

NBC's newscasts included 722 minutes of international news, compared with 664 and 686 for ABC and CBS, respectively, Tyndall reports. Still, that's a far cry from the 1,490 minutes of international news that NBC aired in 1989.

Alexandra Wallace, an NBC News senior vice president, says things started to change about four years ago, for two reasons: The ad market softened and technology allowed reporters "to do more with less."

"I hate to use such a business-y term, but we right-sized our organization," Wallace says.

She acknowledges that the right-sizing has come at a time when Americans' involvement in foreign countries has increased, not only because the nation is caught up in two wars, but because of the global economy and the Internet. "I think the population is engaged in the rest of the world in a way that it probably wasn't before," she says. "This generation is absolutely global. Their Facebook friends are in Dubai."

But how much does NBC report on Dubai? If you search several NBC Web sites, you might come up with a clip on the world's tallest building, which opened there in early 2010. You'd be hard-pressed to learn much else about the emirate.

No matter how much editors and producers say they value foreign news, statistics show that they don't value it enough to bestow the kind of time or space to it that they did in the past. The Tyndall Report illustrates the decline among television networks. An AJR analysis of eight regional newspapers shows a similar drop in that medium. Consider: On seven days in 1985, the Cincinnati Enquirer, Dallas Morning News, Fresno Bee, Philadelphia Inquirer, Providence Journal, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Tampa Tribune and Portland's Oregonian collectively published 689 foreign stories, editorials and op-eds (see "Shrinking Foreign Coverage," page 19). On seven days this year, the same papers printed just 321 such pieces. In 1985, 102 of the stories—almost 15 percent—were staff-written; this year, only 14—or 4.3 percent—of them were.

"Some of it is hard to measure," says American University's Campbell, "but it's a real loss."

There are three approaches to foreign reporting: Don't do it (use the wires), do it sporadically (parachute in) or do it all the time (maintain bureaus).

Roy Gutman is an avid all-the-timer.

Gutman was based in Bonn, Germany, as Newsday's European bureau chief in 1992 when, during a trip to the former Yugoslavia, he first heard the term "ethnic cleansing." He spent months in the region ferreting out a story that would horrify the world: Bosnian Serbs had set up a network of concentration camps, where they imprisoned, beat, starved and murdered Muslims. With the endorsement of top state officials,

whole villages were deported and women systematically raped. Gutman's work in 1992 and 1993 prompted the closure of some of the worst camps, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees credited him with saving 5,000 to 6,000 lives.

"If Newsday had not let me follow my nose in the Balkans, I'm sure that the ethnic cleansing, genocide, would have been reported, but who knows when, how, to what degree and to what extent it would have been a clear-cut story instead of 'on the one hand, on the other hand,'" Gutman says now.

Working in a bureau and getting to know a country or a region of the world enable reporters to pick up on things that outsiders—even seasoned journalists (and former foreign correspondents) who parachute in for days or weeks—would be much less likely to learn, he says. When you cover city hall or the police department or county courts, you go there day in and day out, get to know the terrain, learn the issues, develop sources, become a presence. Covering a piece of the world is like covering any other beat—writ large. You have to do basic, shoe-leather reporting. You have to get to know the place, the people, the pulse.

Unfortunately, Gutman says, very few newspapers spend the time or money to get to know the world anymore. They have downsized so much that if they have foreign bureaus at all, they tend to be in war zones, places where the story is obvious and, to a great extent, dictated by government actions. Fewer reporters from fewer news outlets have time to get off the beaten path, to do what Gutman did when he followed his nose—and uncovered human atrocities.

"It's so sad," he says. "American journalism, it seems to me, when applied to the world, has done exceptionally good work, and it's vital for the American public and for the democracy. And to be pulling back as we are having to is more than hurting, it's really tragic."

Newsday, which Tribune Co. sold to Cablevision in 2008, no longer has foreign correspondents. Top editors did not return repeated phone calls for this story, and a spokesman said no editor was available for comment. The paper won four Pulitzer Prizes for international reporting between 1985 and 2005. One, in 1993, went to Gutman.

Gutman now serves as foreign editor for McClatchy, working from its Washington bureau. In the four years since he accepted that job, his budget has been halved. "We've had to shrink almost every year," he says.

Gone are McClatchy bureaus in Jerusalem, Berlin, Nairobi, Moscow, Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro. "Baghdad went from being a very expensive and major operation to a pared-down operation" in which McClatchy this year shared a correspondent with the Christian Science Monitor, Gutman says. (The partnership ends January 1.) There was some good news: McClatchy opened bureaus in Kabul and Mexico City and has maintained those in Beijing and Cairo. The chain uses stringers to cover Jerusalem and Islamabad.

“I’m excited for what we still have,” says McClatchy Foreign Editor Roy Gutman, whose roster of foreign bureaus has shrunk. “I’m depressed for what we’ve lost”

“I’m excited for what we still have. I’m depressed for what we’ve lost,” Gutman says. “Literally, you don’t want to lose anything. You need to be everywhere. We’re not covering Europe or Russia right now, which is egregious. It’s not as important a story to America right now as Mexico or Afghanistan, but big things happen there.”

“What we’ve done is reduce ourselves, in a sense, to a series of war bureaus as kind of an irreducible minimum, plus Beijing,” he says. “If you have to do a triage, those are places you cannot leave. But there’s all the rest of the news that we’re not covering the way that we’d like to.”

Although he admires some of the stories produced by organizations like the Pulitzer Center and the International Reporting Project, Gutman doesn’t think they adequately fill the void. To really sense what’s going on in a region, to catch the nuance and notice trends, you have to be in-country, he avers.

“Some of the projects coming out of there are absolutely first class,” Gutman says. “But they are projects. You wouldn’t be able to spot the shift in Pakistan policy in the tribal areas based on a three-month project. And that’s the test. What are the turning points?...You have to follow your nose.”

As Gutman sees it, there are two major impediments to foreign coverage: money and interest. Maintaining a bureau costs hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in correspondents’ salaries, rent and supplies, money for local staff and \$4,000 or \$5,000 a month in travel expenses, he says. Even if you can afford the upfront expenditure, you face a significant problem on the back end, as newspaper editors shun foreign news in favor of local stories.

“Foreign is not everybody’s top priority,” Gutman says. “I like to be competitive on the daily coverage. In a number of our papers, something we regard as a first-class foreign story could be a brief. But other papers devote significant space to stories we feel are important.”

Fortunately for Gutman and his correspondents, the people who run McClatchy still value what they do, even if some individual editors at the chain’s 30 daily newspapers don’t. And, in an ironic twist, Gutman says, his reporters’ stories often receive better play in non-McClatchy papers that subscribe to the McClatchy-Tribune News Service. “We do offer an

alternative to the [New York] Times’ coverage, which tends to be long and exhaustive, and AP’s, which is shorter, tighter and tends to be re-led [with new tops] and often fact-laden. We try to be well-written,” he says.

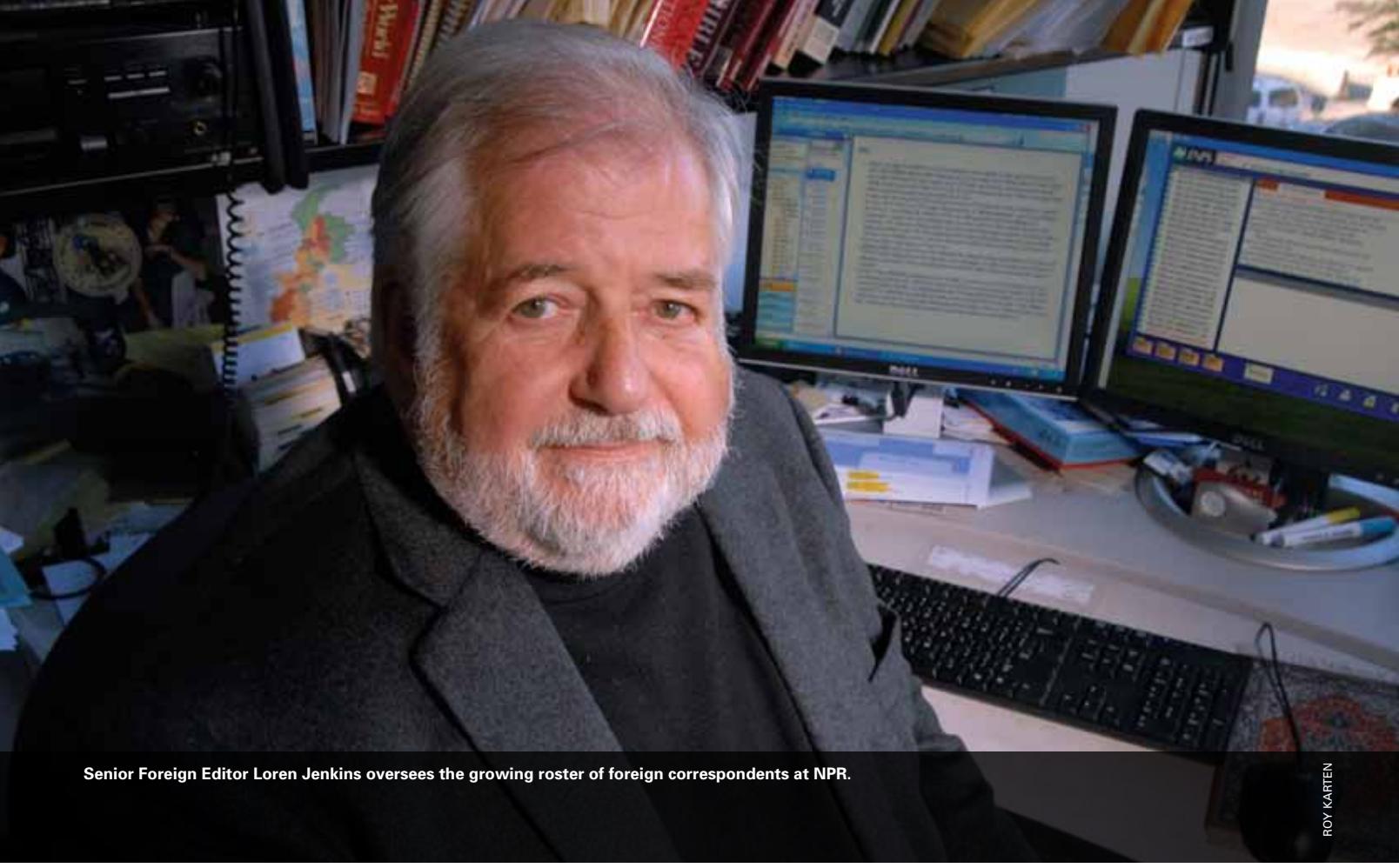
In days gone by, a number of newspapers and chains provided alternatives to the wires and the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and Los Angeles Times. Now, you can count them on one hand. “We’ve lost those extra voices,” Gutman says. “So we’re losing the fabric of coverage.”

F

or a long time, the Baltimore Sun was revered for its national and foreign reporting. Nothing was off limits to its journalists, recalls Robert Ruby, the paper’s last foreign editor. “It regarded its readers as adults and as people who were interested in the world. And the world extended beyond Baltimore, it extended beyond Maryland, it extended beyond the U.S. There was this very untypical belief that the Sun could tell the story for its readers better than anyone else could on a given day. And if the story was in Moscow, so be it. If the story was in Annapolis, so be it. That was the DNA of the paper. The economic model for much of the 20th century could support that idea.”

Ruby left the paper in 2006 and now directs communications for the Revenue Watch Institute, a New York-based nonprofit that “promotes the responsible management of oil, gas and mineral resources.” (Initially, the organization was financed by the Open Society Institute.) Ruby says things started changing at the Sun when Tribune Co. bought its parent company, Times Mirror, in 2000.

“There’s a smaller newshole. What goes into the newshole in almost every case is shorter than it used to be,” he says. “If one really thinks that all news can be homogenized, then the argument that it doesn’t matter who writes it would be correct. I don’t happen to believe that. If you accept the argument that you only need one person covering a story, then having different voices doesn’t matter. But I don’t buy that either.... I think we would all agree that there are many different stories



Senior Foreign Editor Loren Jenkins oversees the growing roster of foreign correspondents at NPR.

ROY KARTEN

to write about, say, the White House on any given day. There are many ways of writing about what Congress does. Certainly, it's reasonable to believe that we're losing something, readers are losing something, intelligence is losing something, if we only have one or two or three voices coming from Moscow or Jerusalem or Lima."

When it shuttered its last foreign bureau, in Jerusalem, in 2006, the Philadelphia Inquirer closed the door on an era in which its reporters felt that, at home or abroad, nothing was impossible. If they had a good idea, they pursued it. And it paid off in a paper rich with stories—important, interesting and, very often, prize-winning—that you just couldn't find anywhere else. (Disclosure: I worked at the Inquirer during that era.)

Vernon Loeb was an Inquirer foreign correspondent based in the Philippines from 1989 to 1992, when the paper had six foreign bureaus. Now the deputy managing editor for news, he oversees a newsroom staff that plummeted in size from 680 during the fat and happy years—"back in the day," Loeb says—to 280 today. Its recent trajectory is one for the ages: corporate-mandated cutbacks, higher profit margins, new owners, bankruptcy, buyouts, layoffs, empty desks, more new owners, much uncertainty. The paper is now in the hands of creditors of the local group that acquired the Inquirer from McClatchy in 2006.

To hear Loeb tell it, the Inquirer still has grand aspirations, but it lacks the resources to accomplish them all. So it scales back, strives to be the best at less, concentrates on local news and covers the world in spurts.

"For foreign news, we mainly use the wires, and we send our own reporters out pretty robustly when there are stories that really speak powerfully to Philadelphia in some fashion or that are of such magnitude that it almost cries out to send somebody," he says.

Haiti cried out. In the aftermath of the earthquake in January, the Inquirer sent two reporters to the Caribbean country. Feature writer Melissa Dribben traveled with Philadelphia-area medical professionals who volunteered to aid victims. She ended up producing a series of stories about a Haitian-American nurse practitioner who left his home in Florida to join the relief effort. Former Jerusalem correspondent Michael Matza flew to Haiti with doctors from a Camden, New Jersey, hospital and also wrote about a woman whose arm was amputated by a surgeon from the University of Pennsylvania. Both reporters returned to the island later in the year and, all told, spent four weeks there, Loeb says.

The Inquirer also sent a reporter to Afghanistan for a month to embed with troops alongside a local doctor. And it sent Dribben to Hungary after a sightseeing boat capsized in the Delaware River, drowning two students from the small Hungarian town of Mosonmagyaróvár.

"We still have foreign ambitions, and we still do foreign reporting, but it's much more episodic," Loeb says. "Our readers now get more news from the New York Times and the Washington Post and Los Angeles Times. Do the readers notice that? I don't even know."

"When we had our own bureaus and could tailor our own coverage, it probably made a difference. Foreign reporting was

more a part of the fabric of the paper," he says, choosing the same term as Gutman.

"By the same token, look, we're living in the real world here."

The real world of bankruptcy, of struggling to survive.

The "new reality."

Local. Local. Local.

"Our bread and butter is local and regional coverage," Loeb says. "It's not foreign and national coverage. I don't think that's probably going to change anytime soon, as much as I'd love to open six foreign bureaus again. Most of the top editors here have been national or foreign correspondents. We know how to cover the world and the nation. We're going to do it when we can give our readers something special."

Though it no longer has foreign bureaus—and slashed its national staff from seven bureaus to a lone Washington reporter who concentrates on projects—the Inquirer still saves space on the front page each day for some foreign and national news, Loeb says. In that way, it is different from many regional papers. "Most of our readers get all their news from us," he says, tacitly rejecting the notion that newspapers don't need to provide foreign news because it is available elsewhere. "We are the indispensable news source for a lot of people, and they count on us for foreign and national news."

Not so the Detroit News. In March 2009, the News, which is owned by MediaNews Group, and its partner in a joint operating agreement, the Gannett-owned Detroit Free Press, reduced home delivery to three days a week to save money. A scaled-back version of the papers is available at newsstands on other days. "The amount of newshole available for foreign news has been curtailed," says News Managing Editor Don Nauss.

The News relies on the Associated Press for most of its foreign news and on Bloomberg for business news from overseas. "We aren't aware of any significant complaints," Nauss says. "I don't think people in general look to us for that coverage."

The News last had a foreign correspondent—in Germany—in 2003. Detroit is an automobile town, and the correspondent, Daniel Howes, focused on the auto industry and the merger between Chrysler and Daimler. When Howes returned to Detroit, the bureau remained empty and then closed. Editors considered opening a bureau in Japan or, alternately, in Southern California, where a number of Asian automakers base their U.S. sales offices. They did neither.

"That all kind of fell by the wayside as our business changed," Nauss says. Daimler sold Chrysler to an equity firm and the newspaper's resources tightened. "Some of our ambitions had to be pared back...."

"There's no question that newspapers in the past 20 to 25 years have reduced their troops on the ground abroad, and I'm sure that has some impact on our isolationist views of the world. But we have to face the reality of what we can do monetarily."

The News will send reporters overseas on occasion. In 2010,

such parachuting was limited to Haiti, to cover Michigan's response to the earthquake.

At the Post-Dispatch, in another industrial Midwestern city, Arnie Robbins made precisely the same decision and dispatched a reporter and a photographer to document St. Louisans' relief work in Haiti.

Although he laments his paper's diminished foreign coverage, Robbins says the tradeoff is worth it. Money and space, both less abundant than they once were, now are given to hard-hitting local stories, the kind that require digging, the kind that make a difference.

"It's about priorities. Our priority is primarily local," Robbins says. "It's increasingly public service, investigative reporting, high-impact enterprise, which takes time. If I had to choose between that and overseas travel, I'd take local high-impact investigative enterprise."

S

ome papers, primarily those that view themselves as national or international in scope, still spend a lot of money on foreign coverage. The Wall Street Journal has 35 foreign bureaus; the New York Times, 24. The Washington Post maintains 17 bureaus and the Los Angeles Times, 13. Though each paper's international coverage remains strong, each one has closed some bureaus during the past seven or eight years.

Then there's NPR, one of the very few mainstream news outlets that has completely bucked the trend to trim. In the past decade, its foreign bureaus have mushroomed from six to 17, and it has part-time correspondents in two more, says Senior Foreign Editor Loren Jenkins. The calculation was simple, Jenkins says: "It was perceived that this was an area that needed coverage, and we were the people to do it."

It didn't hurt that while most other media outlets were experiencing enormous revenue losses, NPR received an infusion of money. There were two principal reasons. Its audience, which grew consistently through the 1990s, shot up after September 11, 2001, when many public radio stations around the country switched their focus from music to news, says Ellen Weiss, NPR's senior vice president for news. That shift translated into increased payments from member stations that air NPR programs and more listener donations to the nonprofit, which relies heavily on the largesse of its audience. To top it off, when she died in late 2003, Joan Kroc, widow of McDonald's founder Ray A. Kroc, left NPR more than \$200 million—an amount that the Washington Post reported was more than twice as large as the organization's operating budget at the time.

The combination allowed NPR to add three foreign bureaus between 2003 and 2006 alone, during the same period when regional newspapers were shuttering their overseas offices and bringing their correspondents home.

Now, a full 30 percent of what NPR broadcasts in reports from its correspondents and on-air interviews is international in scope, Jenkins says. He and Weiss emphasize that, while it covers Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, NPR also sends reporters to parts of the globe that many news outlets ignore, places where the United States is not involved in wars. Weiss is particularly proud of NPR's presence in sub-Saharan Africa—in Dakar, Nairobi and Johannesburg. "While there is a lot of conflict there," she says, "the purpose is to explain to people that Africa is far more important and intricate than conflict and genocide."

Fewer than 10 blocks west of NPR's headquarters in downtown Washington stands the bland, brick box of a building that houses the city's dominant newspaper. Jenkins worked for the Washington Post in 1983, when he won a Pulitzer Prize for international reporting for his coverage of Israel's invasion of Beirut and its aftermath. He and Douglas Jehl, the Post's foreign editor, share a keenness for foreign reporting.

But Jehl and his colleagues at the Post have had to make the difficult decisions that Jenkins and Weiss have not. The paper has closed some foreign bureaus and opened others, for a net loss of three since 2003.

Like so many papers from coast to coast, the Post has gone through a series of painful cutbacks and compressions. A number of its best-known and most seasoned reporters have taken advantage of repeated buyout offers—the capital's think tanks, foundations, nonprofits and PR shops are littered with former Posties—and its staff is stretched thin. Nonetheless, Jehl asserts that the paper is committed to foreign coverage, in part because it is so closely linked to official Washington.

"It's expensive, but it's vital to a paper that is for and about Washington, and I think we have a staff that is large enough to provide insightful, penetrating, value-added coverage to the parts of the world that matter most going forward," he says. "We certainly are smaller than the [New York] Times and the [Wall Street] Journal. We're certainly a lot smaller in terms of foreign coverage than Bloomberg, Reuters, the BBC. It does mean we need to pick our shots. But I think we can and are doing a terrific job covering the world through the prism of what matters most to Washington, to American foreign policy and, in some ways, [to] the way the world's evolving."

Top Post editors opted to maintain the bulk of their foreign bureaus even as they decided in late 2009 to close the paper's remaining national bureaus in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. It previously had shut down bureaus in Miami, Austin and Denver. Then-Post media writer Howard Kurtz, who this fall departed for The Daily Beast, called the move "a significant retrenchment."

"The money-saving move, coming on the heels of four rounds of early-retirement buyouts and the closing or merging of several sections, is the clearest sign yet of the newspaper's shrinking horizons in an era of diminished resources," Kurtz wrote in November of last year. He quoted Executive Editor

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BACKPACK JOURNALISM OVERSEAS

By Priya Kumar

To broadcast live from Baghdad in 1991, reporters needed more than two dozen cases of equipment that took five people to operate, says former CNN senior Pentagon correspondent Jamie McIntyre. When McIntyre filed his last live report for the network from the Iraqi capital in February 2008, he did so through a Webcam in a MacBook Pro via a satellite Internet transmitter.

"When you're a TV reporter and you're doing everything yourself, it does change the way you tell a story," says McIntyre, now an adjunct professor at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland. McIntyre covered the trial of Salim Hamdan, Osama bin Laden's driver and bodyguard, at Guantánamo Bay in summer 2008 without a crew. "I was doing a lot of the logistics myself, which meant I wasn't spending as much time in the courtroom."

Broadcast organizations increasingly rely on smaller one- or two-person operations in most of their foreign bureaus, a strategy that makes sense when money is tight and technology reduces the need for large crews. Most integrate multimedia tools into their reporting, but some journalists want to see the industry do more to capitalize on the unique storytelling opportunities that video journalism offers.

"When we think about opening new bureaus, I think smaller rather than larger," says Alexandra Wallace, a senior vice president of NBC News. "As long as you can keep quality and quantity up, the reality is it takes fewer people to do what it took many people to do, and that's really, truly based on technology."

An individual digital correspondent costs far less than a full-fledged bureau, but Wallace emphasizes that newsworthiness trumps budgetary concerns when it comes to foreign coverage. "We feel like we have the right amount of people overseas," she says. The network has 14 foreign bureaus and an editorial presence in another four countries.



Jamie McIntyre



Alexandra Wallace

The shift toward mobile journalists, or digital correspondents, is also part of ABC News' approach. Three years ago, the network sent seven digital correspondents to form solo bureaus around the world (see "Armies of One," December 2007/January 2008). At first they primarily produced content for the Web and radio, but many eventually got more on-air exposure, says Kate O'Brian, ABC's senior vice president for news. ABC has an editorial presence in 19 cities around the world.

Both network executives say that most of the foreign stories that make it onto the TV newscast are hard news; features typically run only digitally.

"Particularly with our overseas digital reporters, you'll find that when they file for our ABC News iPad app, they'll file a different sort of story, because they don't have the time constraints television has," O'Brian says.

Ian Williams, NBC's Bangkok-based correspondent, acknowledges that it's difficult to balance covering the meat-and-potatoes stories with ferreting out new angles and perspectives. But the Internet gives more mileage to a reporter's notebook, he says. Curious viewers who want more context for a story they see on television can turn to the Web for blog posts, photographs and extended interviews.

Williams and both network executives say decisions on how many people to send and which tools they use depend on what the story is about. Correspondents use whatever the right platform is at the right moment, Wallace says, though she adds that ultimately NBC is a television company.

The use of Web tools as secondary components to a mainstream media product irks Jane Stevens, one of the early advocates of backpack reporting. Stevens, who calls herself a "Webcentric" journalist, embraced the video journalism movement beginning in 1996 and now directs media strategies for the World Company, which owns Kansas' Lawrence Journal-World.

Network news ratings are down because people in today's news ecosystem want more context than they can get in a two-minute story, Stevens says. She praises BBC's use of special reports pages (bbc.co.uk/news/special_reports/), archived by year and organized into geographic and subject categories. The pages, which compile stories, graphics, maps and photos related to a specific topic, give readers a comprehensive look at BBC's coverage of a particular issue and offer background information when related news breaks.

Transitioning into a truly multimedia environment is difficult when mainstream media organizations remain married to their original platforms, and Stevens has little faith that they will adapt.



Ian Williams

She tracks niche Web-based operations and cites GlobalPost (see "Retreating from the World," page 14) as the most successful digital-native outlet for foreign news.

"Organizations that just go after the immediate lose a lot of ability to tell the whole story," Stevens says. "The idea that you could have one person covering Europe is really reaching into the absurd."

Competition has always been the industry's lifeblood, but today's 24-hour news cycle places a premium on getting information out rather than telling a compelling story. And that means media organizations aren't taking advantage of emerging styles of storytelling, says Tom Kennedy, former managing editor for multimedia at washingtonpost.com.

"There's this ingrained reflex of 'let's keep moving to the next thing,'" Kennedy says. "And while I understand that influence and respect the need to do that, I think that leaves open an entirely different form of coverage."

Traditional broadcast pieces are often reporter driven. But technological advances and ever-shrinking equipment mean a backpack journalist can produce a piece that connects with the viewer on a more intimate level. Using documentary-style techniques, video journalism can capture a subject telling his or her own story through words or actions with little reporter involvement. Emotion and empathy can convey cultural and historical nuances more viscerally than a reporter's commentary.

"It's been so mystifying to me why organizations have been slow to do even modest experimentation" with this type of storytelling, says Kennedy, who now heads the consulting and training company Tom Kennedy Multimedia. "A very well-funded person or company needs to create a short documentary cable channel that goes beyond what Current TV is doing that plants the flag for feature stories."

Although news organizations may differ in how they integrate new technology into their repertoire, most agree that multimedia has been a boon to foreign coverage.

"I think the new ways that we work and the new technologies that we use are really quite liberating, and I'm really quite optimistic about foreign news," NBC's Williams says. "It's enhancing us rather than undermining us."



Jane Stevens



Tom Kennedy



Washington Post Foreign Editor Douglas Jehl says international coverage is “expensive, but it’s vital to a paper that is for and about Washington.”

ROY KARTEN

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Marcus Brauchli as saying that the paper could “effectively cover the rest of the country from Washington.”

Jehl says the same claim could not be made about covering the world. It might save money, but at great cost.

“We do feel, in terms of foreign coverage, that you cannot replace the kinds of insight and sourcing and understanding gained by living in a foreign country and immersing yourself in that culture. The task of becoming a sophisticated observer and translator of foreign countries is difficult,” says Jehl, formerly a correspondent in the New York Times’ Cairo bureau.

“You’ve got language, you’ve got culture, you’ve got logistics, you have the enormous gulf between what your readers know and the realities on the ground and the task of interpreting and making sense of that.”

Certainly, Jehl acknowledges, there have been sacrifices.

“We recognize that with a staff of our size, we couldn’t cover all parts of the world equally, particularly when the paper’s mission is to cover Washington,” he says. “We decided to leave unfilled our bureaus in Rio and Johannesburg in order to throw more resources at Afghanistan and Pakistan, to reopen a bureau in the Arab world outside of Baghdad and to make sure we were covering China as vigorously as we can.”

Just as some regional papers choose to cover international stories that have particular resonance with their readers, the Post concentrates much of its foreign coverage on issues and countries pertinent to its audience. But there is a big difference. The Post’s stock in trade is not coverage of local stories, but of national ones. So its international report tends to have foreign policy implications.

“We’re providing readers everywhere with a report that’s framed around what matters most to a capital and to a government that remains the most powerful and influential in the world,” Jehl says. “It’s not like we’re providing localized coverage. I think we’re providing coverage that reflects developments that are most important out there.”

He also dismisses heavy reliance on the wires or other organizations, such as GlobalPost, reasoning that his reporters put foreign developments in context for their readers in a way that the rest do not.

And so, Jehl says, the Post will continue to spend millions

FAREWELL TO FOGGY BOTTOM

The number of newspapers and newspaper chains covering the State Department has shrunk dramatically since 2003, the last time AJR conducted its foreign reporting survey. Today just six newspaper reporters spend at least half of their time covering foreign affairs and the State Department, compared with 13 seven years ago.

BOSTON GLOBE

Farah Stockman

MCCLATCHY

Warren P. Strobel

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Howard LaFranchi

NEW YORK TIMES

Mark Landler

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Paul Richter

WASHINGTON POST

John Pomfret

Los Angeles Times Foreign Editor Bruce Wallace says international reporting “is an integral part of the Los Angeles Times. It’s part of the corporate mission to do this kind of reporting.”

of dollars a year on foreign bureaus. That said, the paper has saved money by directing most foreign correspondents to close freestanding offices and work out of their homes, and by hiring some reporters on a contract basis, which allows the Post to pay them less and to withhold benefits.

“What we want to do is to maintain our news coverage, maintain the ability of correspondents to travel widely and to report intensively, and so we try to save money in other places,” Jehl explains.

The Post’s cuts have been nothing compared with those undertaken by the Los Angeles Times, which closed 43 percent of its foreign bureaus when it went from 23 in 2003 to 13 today. The downsizing is even more striking when you consider that the L.A. Times is providing foreign coverage for all the Tribune Co. papers, several of which also closed bureaus in the recent past.

In fact, just seven years ago, other Tribune Co. newspapers—the Baltimore Sun, Chicago Tribune, Orlando Sentinel, Fort Lauderdale’s Sun-Sentinel and Newsday (which the chain has since sold)—had 25 foreign bureaus among them. None of those papers has any bureaus today.

Although the rest of the chain obliterated its bureaus, the L.A. Times’ foreign editor, Bruce Wallace, says the paper “has made a commitment” to foreign reporting. “Foreign news is an integral part of the Los Angeles Times. It’s part of the corporate mission to do this kind of reporting. We get our stories on the front page almost daily. Our A section opens with world news. The other thing we’re doing is our correspondents increasingly write for other parts of the paper” on such subjects as the arts, entertainment, business and global health. “It infuses all of the paper and the Web site with more of a global feel, a global reach. It’s stitched into the fabric of the paper,” he says, invoking the same language as Gutman and Loeb.

“What the company decided to do,” Wallace says, “is make the commitment to stay in the game. But they also decided they couldn’t replicate it throughout the company. That’s not a bad decision.... I think the most important thing to realize is that world news is not icing on the cake. It’s not something to get rid of when you’re thinking of ways to save money.”

Wallace says his staff might be smaller, but it’s still “robust” and large enough to produce a daily report along with enterprise reporting. “You do need a staff of a certain size. Otherwise

you become a boutique operation. Which has been done,” he says. “But those operations didn’t survive.”

“Those operations” would include the ones run by the L.A. Times’ sister papers, most notably the Chicago Tribune and Baltimore Sun, which in 2003 staffed 10 and five foreign bureaus, respectively. Editors at the Sun declined interview requests. But at the chain’s flagship Chicago Tribune, Colin McMahon, the editor who compiles the foreign news for most Tribune Co. papers, says he is satisfied both with Wallace’s foreign report and with his own paper’s decision to plow money formerly spent on foreign bureaus into local investigative and watchdog reporting.

“Before, we were a pseudo national paper in the Midwest,” McMahon says. “We’re not that anymore. Now we’re a day-to-day watchdog paper. It’s a stronger identity than we had before....

“What you don’t get is that story about a Chicagoan in Siberia. I think that that brings something to the report, but it’s not a make-or-break thing. Most readers want to know about the Chicago City Hall and how it affects their lives.

“That’s a great bit of chocolate that we miss.”

McMahon provided plenty of that “chocolate” when he was in the field, with beautifully crafted stories that gave Chicagoans a true taste of wherever he happened to be in the world. He wrote vividly about a Jewish Autonomous Region in Russia that was bereft of Jews; about the impact of Iraq’s guerrilla war on one Baghdad neighborhood; about the alarming, violent deaths of Mexican peasants who dared to oppose one state’s governor. He went to Pisco, Peru, to explore the strained relations between Peru and Chile and used the grape brandy that shares the port city’s name as a symbol of the discord.

Some of the stories were weighty, some less so. Each shed light on faraway lands and people and cultures, on corners of the world that wouldn’t otherwise be in the media spotlight.

And, for the most part, no longer are. 

Jodi Enda (jaenda@gmail.com) writes about politics and government from Washington, D.C. She previously covered the White House, presidential campaigns and Congress for Knight Ridder and was a national correspondent for the Philadelphia Inquirer. Enda wrote about declining coverage of federal agencies and departments in AJR’s Summer issue.

WHO COVERS WHAT

The number of foreign correspondents employed by U.S. newspapers has decreased markedly since the last AJR census, taken in 2003. A count largely conducted in July shows that 10 newspapers and one chain employ 234 correspondents (including one vacancy) to serve as eyes and ears to global events. In 2003, AJR found 307 full-time correspondents and pending assignments. The current list includes a combination of staffers and contract writers, who were not included in 2003. They were counted this time to reflect changes in the industry. If only full-time correspondents were listed, the current total would be far lower. Stringers are not included in the tally.

The chart lists domestically based reporters who spend a portion of their time covering foreign news, but they are not included in the total. The same is true for reporters who are based in the U.S. and cover border issues.

Twenty papers and companies have cut their foreign bureaus entirely since AJR conducted its first census of foreign correspondents in 1998. Only six papers and chains dedicate reporters in Washington, D.C., to cover the foreign affairs beat, down from 13 in 2003.

The current list includes the Associated Press and Bloomberg News, which were not included in previous AJR surveys.

As for television networks, where airtime for foreign news has declined dramatically over the years, the numbers do not precisely reflect the reality of staffing levels. Some networks this year were more open in their responses than others, so a direct comparison to previous surveys is impossible. NBC distinguished between full-fledged bureaus and editorial presence, listing 14 bureaus and an editorial presence in four other countries. "Editorial presence" means that the organization has at least one representative, who may be a staffer, on contract or a freelancer. In the 2003 count, the networks listed 42 bureaus with full-time correspondents. This year, ABC and CNN declined to distinguish between bureaus and editorial presence, simply listing the cities where they have some representation. CBS declined to provide any information.

One bright spot is the growing international presence of NPR, which has 17 foreign bureaus. NPR had six foreign bureaus a decade ago.

Research for this chart was conducted by Priya Kumar.

THE OVERSEAS PRESS CORPS

[Numbers reflect current bureau total, with 2003 total in parentheses]

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL 0 (0)

• Border issues: *Rene Romo*

ARIZONA REPUBLIC 1 (1)

• Mexico City: *Chris Hawley* (*half-paid by USA Today*) *Only counted once in overall total of correspondents
• Border issues: *Dennis Wagner*

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR 7 (7)

• Baghdad: *Jane Arraf* (*Cost of bureau shared with McClatchy*)
• Beijing: *Peter Ford*
• Istanbul: *Scott Peterson*
• Johannesburg: *Scott Baldauf*
• Mexico City: *Sara Miller Llana*
• New Delhi: *Ben Arnoldy*
• Paris: *Bob Marquand*

DALLAS MORNING NEWS 1 (4)

• Mexico City: *Alfredo Corchado*

EL PASO TIMES

No foreign correspondents, but extensive coverage of Mexico.

HOUSTON CHRONICLE 1 (3)

• Mexico City: *Dudley Althaus*
• Border issues/drug war: *Dane Schiller*

LOS ANGELES TIMES 13 (24)

• Baghdad: *Ned Parker*
• Beijing: *Barbara Demick, Megan Stack, David Pierson*
• Beirut: *Borzou Daragahi*
• Cairo: *Jeffrey Fleishman*
• Islamabad: *Alex Rodriguez*
• Jerusalem: *Edmund Sanders*
• Johannesburg: *Robyn Dixon*
• Kabul: *Laura King*
• London: *Henry Chu*
• Mexico City: *Ken Ellingwood, Tracy Wilkinson*
• Moscow: *Vacant*
• New Delhi: *Mark Magnier*
• Seoul: *John Glionna*

McCLATCHY 4 (KNIGHT RIDDER 8)

• Beijing: *Tom Lasseter*
• Cairo: *Hannah Allam* (*spent half year in Baghdad in a bureau shared with Christian Science Monitor*)
• Kabul: *Dion Nissenbaum*
• Mexico City: *Tim Johnson*

MIAMI HERALD

No foreign correspondents, but Jim Wyss, who is based in Miami, covers the northern tier of South America. The Herald listed 3 foreign bureaus in 2003.

NEW YORK TIMES 24 (27)

• Baghdad: *Steve Myers, Anthony Shadid, Timothy Williams, Nada Bakri*
• Beijing: *Mike Wines, Ed Wong, Andrew Jacobs, Sharon LaFraniere, Ian Johnson*
• Beirut: *Robert Worth*
• Berlin: *Michael Slackman*
• Cairo: *David Kirkpatrick*
• Caracas: *Simon Romero*
• Dakar: *Adam Nossiter*
• Hong Kong: *Keith Bradsher*
• Islamabad: *Jane Perlez, Sabrina Tavernise*
• Jakarta: *Nori Onishi*
• Jerusalem: *Ethan Bronner, Stephen Farrell, Isabel Kershner*
• Johannesburg: *Barry Bearak, Celia Dugger*
• Kabul: *Alissa Rubin, Carlotta Gall, Dexter Filkins, Rod Nordland, Rich Oppel*
• London: *John Burns, Landon Thomas, Sarah Lyall*
• Mexico City: *Randal Archibald, Damien Cave, Elisabeth Malkin*
• Moscow: *Cliff Levy, Ellen Barry*
• Mumbai: *Vikas Bajaj*
• Nairobi: *Jeffrey Gettleman*
• New Delhi: *James Yardley, Lydia Polgreen, Hari Kumar*
• Paris: *Steven Erlanger, Alan Cowell*
(Based in International Herald Tribune office), *Marlise Simons, John Tagliabue*
• Rome: *Rachel Donadio*
• São Paulo: *Alexei Barionuevo*
• Shanghai: *David Barboza*
• Tokyo: *Martin Fackler, Hiroko Tabuchi (IHT)*

SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS 0 (1)

• Border issues: *Lynn Brezosky*

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE 1 (1)

• Tijuana: *Sandra Dibble*
• Border issues: *Morgan Lee*

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

No foreign correspondents, but John Boudreau covers the Pacific Rim.

USA TODAY 5 (4)

• Beijing: *Calum MacLeod, Sunny Yang*
• Hong Kong: *Kathy Chu*
• London: *Traci Watson*
• Kabul: *William M. Welch*
• Mexico City: *Chris Hawley* (*Shared with Arizona Republic*) *Only counted once in overall total of correspondents

WALL STREET JOURNAL 35 (36)

Franchise staff based abroad totals 129. Franchise staff comprises the news departments of the U.S., Asia and Europe editions of the Wall Street Journal and WSJ.com.

• Baghdad	• Brussels
• Bangkok	• Buenos Aires
• Beijing	• Dubai
• Beirut	• Frankfurt
• Berlin	• Hong Kong

- Istanbul
- Jakarta
- Jerusalem
- Johannesburg
- Kabul
- Kuala Lumpur
- Lagos
- London
- Manila
- Mexico City
- Moscow
- Mumbai
- New Delhi
- Paris
- Prague
- Rio de Janeiro
- Rome
- São Paulo
- Seoul
- Shanghai
- Singapore
- Taipei
- Tokyo
- Toronto
- Zurich

WASHINGTON POST 17 (20)

- Baghdad: *Ernesto Londoño, Liz Sly*
- Beijing: (*Andrew Higgins* in accreditation process)
- Berlin: *Michael Birnbaum* (Opening Jan. 1)
- Bogotá: *Juan Forero*
- Cairo: *Leila Fadel* (Opening Jan. 1)
- Islamabad: *Karin Brulliard*
- Jerusalem: *Janine Zacharia*
- Kabul: *Joshua Partlow*
- London: *Anthony Faiola*
- Mexico City: *William Booth*
- Moscow: *Kathy Lally, Will Englund*
- Nairobi: *Sudarsan Raghavan*
- New Delhi: *Emily Wax, Rama Lakshmi*
- Paris: *Ed Cody*
- Shanghai: *Keith Richburg*
- Tehran: *Thomas Erdbrink*
- Tokyo: *Chico Harlan*

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Global staff of 3,700 employees working in 304 locations in 116 countries; 2,400 are newsgatherers. Six international regional editing hubs:

- Bangkok: Asia-Pacific desk
- Cairo: Middle East desk
- Johannesburg: sub-Saharan Africa desk
- London: Europe-Africa desk
- Mexico City: Latin America desk
- New York: North America desk

BLOOMBERG NEWS

Global staff of more than 2,300 in 146 bureaus (101 are foreign) in 72 countries. Content syndicated to more than 450 media outlets in 66 countries with a combined circulation of 78 million people. A breakdown of the number of correspondents based abroad was not available.

AMERICAS

- Bogotá
- Brasília
- Buenos Aires
- Calgary
- Caracas
- Lima
- Mexico City
- Monterrey
- Montreal
- Ottawa
- Quito
- Rio de Janeiro
- Santiago
- São Paulo
- Toronto
- Vancouver

EUROPE/MIDEAST/AFRICA

- Abu Dhabi
- Abuja
- Accra
- Almaty
- Amman
- Amsterdam
- Ankara
- Athens
- Belfast
- Belgrade
- Berlin
- Bratislava
- Brussels
- Bucharest
- Budapest
- Cairo
- Cape Town
- Copenhagen
- Doha
- Dubai
- Dublin
- Dusseldorf
- Edinburgh
- Frankfurt
- Geneva
- Helsinki
- İstanbul
- Jerusalem
- Johannesburg
- Kiev
- Kuwait
- Lagos
- Lisbon
- Ljubljana
- London
- Luxembourg
- Madrid
- Manama
- Milan
- Moscow
- Munich
- Nairobi
- Nicosia
- Oslo
- Paris
- Prague
- Riga
- Riyadh
- Rome
- Sofia
- St. Petersburg
- Stockholm
- Tallinn
- Tel Aviv
- Toulouse
- Vienna
- Vilnius
- Warsaw
- Zagreb
- Zurich

ASIA/ASIA PACIFIC

- Auckland
- Bangalore
- Bangkok
- Beijing
- Canberra
- Colombo
- Hanoi
- Hong Kong
- Islamabad
- Jakarta
- Karachi
- Kuala Lumpur
- Manila
- Melbourne
- Mumbai
- New Delhi
- Osaka
- Perth
- Seoul
- Shanghai
- Singapore
- Sydney
- Taipei
- Tokyo
- Wellington

TELEVISION AND RADIO

NBC 14

- Baghdad
- Bangkok
- Beijing
- Beirut
- Cairo
- Germany
- Havana
- Islamabad
- Jordan*
- Kabul
- London
- Moscow
- Saudi Arabia*
- South Korea*
- Syria*
- Tel Aviv
- Tehran
- Tokyo

* Editorial presence, not full-fledged bureau.

ABC

- Baghdad
- Beijing
- Buenos Aires
- Dubai
- Havana
- Hong Kong
- Islamabad
- Jerusalem
- Johannesburg
- Kabul
- London
- Mexico City
- Moscow
- Nairobi
- New Delhi
- Paris
- Rome
- Seoul
- Tokyo

Would not distinguish between full-time bureaus and editorial presence.

CBS

The Los Angeles Times reported that as of January 2010, cutbacks would leave bureaus in London and Tokyo and small offices in half a dozen other cities. A CBS News spokesperson said the network has a broader foreign presence, but wouldn't provide details.

CNN

- Abu Dhabi
- Amman
- Baghdad
- Bangkok
- Beijing
- Beirut
- Berlin
- Bogota
- Buenos Aires
- Cairo
- Chennai
- Dubai
- Havana
- Hong Kong
- Islamabad
- Istanbul
- Jakarta
- Jerusalem
- Johannesburg
- Kabul
- Lagos
- London
- Madrid
- Mexico City
- Moscow
- Mumbai
- Nairobi
- New Delhi
- Paris
- Rome
- Santiago
- Seoul
- Tokyo

Would not distinguish between full-time bureaus and editorial presence.

FOX 6 (6)

- Baghdad
- Islamabad
- Jerusalem
- Kabul
- London
- Rome

NPR 17

- Baghdad
- Beijing
- Berlin
- Bogotá*
- Cairo
- Dakar
- İstanbul
- Jakarta
- Jerusalem
- Johannesburg*
- Kabul
- London
- Mexico City
- Moscow
- Nairobi
- New Delhi
- Islamabad
- Rome
- Shanghai

* Part-time correspondents not counted in the total.