

By TAD SZULC

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WASHINGTON, April 24 — The United States Information Agency warned today that the proposed 25 per cent cut in its budget would halt all the Voice of America broadcasting to Eastern Europe and Africa and also seriously curtail many other propaganda and research activities.

The agency also said that 2,360 officials of the agency, about 1,000 of them Americans, out of the present total of nearly 10,000, would be dismissed if Congress endorsed the action taken

last Monday by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The committee slashed the agency's budget for the fiscal year 1973, starting on July 1, from \$200-million to \$154.4-million.

A long internal memorandum from Charles D. Ablard, the Information Agency's general counsel, to the heads of all the departments of the agency summarized the projected impact of the reduction on the current programs, and told them that "this paper may be given general distribution to your contacts."

Agency officials said that Mr. Ablard, whose office also handles liaison between Congress and the agency, expected the department heads to circulate the information to their friends and associates in Washington and elsewhere so that key Senators and Representatives could be advised how the effectiveness of the propaganda programs would be lessened.

No Qualitative Conclusions

The memorandum itself does not, however, directly urge the recipients to seek to influence the members of Congress in any way, nor does it offer qualitative conclusions concerning the effect of shrunken United States informational programs.

A more direct approach was used by the union representing the agency's American employes here and abroad in letters dispatched to every Senator. The letters pleaded for rejection by the full Senate of the cuts recommended by the committee, which is headed by

Senator J. W. Fulbright Democrat of Arkansas.

Bernard Wiesman, president of Local 1812 of the American Federation of Government Employees, at the United States Information Agency, said in the letters:

"We are convinced that such a gagging of the Voice of America, such a smothering of our press and publications, such a blackout of our motion pictures and TV services, and such a near-elimination of United States information centers overseas would terribly undermine American influence among all segments abroad."

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's decision to cut the agency's budget resulted from its dispute with the Nixon Administration over the Administration's invocation of "executive privilege" to deny the Senators access to the agency's "country program memoranda" covering plans for years beyond 1973.

The committee disclosed last Thursday that President Nixon invoked the executive privilege in a memorandum received on March 15, arguing that "country program" papers did not reflect actual Administration policy "but only proposals that are under consideration." Disclosure of the proposals to Congress would "not be in the public interest," the Administration memorandum said.

The agency's budget is expected to be considered by the full Senate next week, and its officials privately fear that the Fulbright committee's stand will be confirmed unless a major change in mood takes place.

They hope for relief when the House of Representatives considers the legislation later in the spring and, presumably, attempts to work out a compromise with Senate conferees. Meanwhile, Information Agency planners said that unless the cuts were restored, the Voice of America would have to reduce its broadcasts from 80 hours weekly in 35 languages to 454 hours in 11 languages. Seven of the 15 relay stations abroad would be shut.

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Sharp Cut in Voice Budget

The Voice would be hardest hit because under the legislation written by the Senate Committee, its budget would be reduced about 30 per cent—from \$46.4-million to \$37.5-million—without flexibility for Frank C.

Shakespeare, the agency director, to shift funds from other programs.

Under the priority list worked out by the agency, the 24 languages to be eliminated from Voice of America broadcasting would include five Slavic ones, but not the Russian. Also to be eliminated would be Albanian, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Rumanian.

The agency's memorandum said that the budget cuts would force the halving of its television and motion picture programs and the elimination of all television satellite transmissions.