



## Media Aid

### **China -- Revamped CCTV-News Channel Increases Live Casts, Commentary**

*CCTV-News, the 24-hour news channel of PRC state-owned China Central Television (CCTV), was observed to revamp its programming between 27 July and 16 August 2009. Under the revised lineup, the channel dropped a number of talk shows and pre-recorded news magazine programs in favor of a heavy focus on live newscasts and news commentaries. The changes follow high-level calls for a greater media focus on news reporting, and some PRC media reported that competitive pressures were behind the changes.*

This OSC Media Aid is based on observations of the channel between 31 August and 14 September. Appendices briefly profile each program and list the current program lineup.

Beijing daily Jinghua Shibao reported on 24 June that CCTV would revamp its channels' programming by year-end, noting that the last overhaul occurred over a decade ago. CCTV-News, also known as CCTV-13, is the first CCTV channel to be overhauled this year and its revamp has been the most comprehensive of the changes observed. Formatting and program line-up changes have also been observed on CCTV-1 and CCTV-4, along with the recasting CCTV-2 as a business channel. OSC last produced a Media Aid on CCTV-News in November 2008 (CPF20081115530001).

### **Live Newscasts, Unique Programming Replace Talk Shows, News Magazines**

Judging from OSC observations of the channel, CCTV-News program lineups and content shifted from mostly pre-recorded feature or news magazine programs in morning and early afternoon hours to a new lineup largely consisting of live content. The CCTV website claimed the revamp was part of an effort by CCTV-News to "reduce emphasis on feature programs and strengthen news coverage" (5 August). The channel now airs 18 hours of live newscasts and other live content each weekday, compared to approximately six hours before the revamp. The weekend lineup airs almost 16 hours of live content daily, but retains four pre-recorded programs.

- Dropped programs include three studio talk shows and four pre-recorded programs featuring interviews or investigative reports.
- A number of programs shared with CCTV-1 were also dropped, resulting in 80 percent of CCTV-News' programming being unique to the channel.

### **News Commentaries Added**

CCTV-News added "short commentaries" (duan ping) segments in newscasts and added an international news discussion program to accompany a domestic discussion program. A CCTV official and media experts claimed these were efforts to "elevate the quality of its news commentaries" (*Jinghua Shibao*, 24 June; *Nanfang Ribao*, 7 July).

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- "Short commentaries" are 3-4 minute segments, often touching on economic, social, and international topics, which feature PRC scholars and experts commenting on news reports carried in newscasts. See OSC Media Aid CPF20090918326001 on short commentaries in the revamped "Morning News" program.
- CCTV-News retained its domestic affairs discussion program "News 1+1." The channel added the "Global Watch" program, which features veteran journalist Shui Junyi in what *Jinghua Shibao* called "China's premier international news commentary" program (12 August).

### Possible Top-Level Pressure, Competition

The CCTV website claimed that the changes were designed to highlight the "professional orientation" of CCTV-News and "building the station around news" (5 August). The changes came in the wake of top-level calls for the mass media to focus on news reporting. In addition, some PRC media suggested competitive pressures as a factor behind the changes.

- In a June 2008 speech, President Hu Jintao praised the positive effects of instantaneous news coverage during major disasters, and called on public media outlets to expand their influence through "innovative" means and to "strengthen the affinity, appeal, and infectivity of news reporting" (party daily *Renmin Ribao*, 20 June 2008). A CPC Propaganda Department circular and later comments by Li Changchun, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee in charge of propaganda work, echoed Hu's remarks. (state-owned news agency Xinhua, 23 June, 26 June 2008, 13 November, 2008).
- A CCTV official called the reform of news coverage "top-down," according to a provincial newspaper report (Guangzhou Provincial Communist Party of China Committee daily *Nanfang Ribao*, 7 July).
- *Nanfang Ribao* cited an academic as saying that motives for the revamp also included competition from other news stations and popular demand, notably from netizens. An article in a Beijing daily noted that CCTV faces competitive pressure from the Internet for news and from local TV stations, such as Hunan Satellite TV, for entertainment (*Xin Jing Bao*, 17 September).

### Initial Favorable Reactions

PRC media claim that ratings for the channel have improved since the changes were implemented and reported approval from netizens and experts.

- A TV survey from late July and early August found that CCTV-News ranked sixth among major PRC TV channels after the revamp, and fifth among CCTV channels, according to data published on the blog-based virtual community *Tianya Shequ* (tianya.cn, 6 August). Previously, CCTV-News had ranked only ninth or tenth among

all 16 CCTV channels, according to a 19 June report on *Jing Bao*, a daily that appeals to urban readers with its picture-centered news coverage.

- Ratings for individual programs increased significantly over pre-revamp numbers, according to figures cited by *Fazhi Wanbao* (Legal Evening News, 17 August). According to the *Zhongguo Jingji Shibao* (China Economic Times) website, ratings for the weekday "World Express" program and late evening "24 Hours" programs increased 35.3 percent and 13.5 percent, respectively.
- Shanghai daily *Dongfang Zaobao* cited a netizen as saying the news channel is "at long last a channel befitting its name," while a journalism professor called the revamp "a belated move to make up for the stagnation over the past decade" (18 August).
- *Xin Jing Bao* noted that the new, young announcers seen on CCTV-News since the revamp "breathe fresh life into the programs" (5 August).

## Appendix A -- Program Profiles

This appendix includes descriptions of CCTV-News's newly-added newscasts, previously pre-recorded programs modified to a newscast format, other revamped programs, retained programs, and programs dropped from the lineup.

### *Newly-Added Newscasts*

-- "Live News" (Xin Wen Zhi Bo Jian)

The new "Live News" hourly newscast airs eight hours per day, and is usually hosted by a different announcer every hour. It is led by a teaser, includes live reports from field reporters, and frequently repeats content each hour. Breaking international and domestic news is specially marked as "zui xin xiao xi." PRC media observers have commented on the newscast's efforts to make the program "more entertaining" (*Xin Jing Bao*, 18 August). One example is a new segment called "Moment in News" consisting of photo essays of interesting news items from around China and the world. The segment's recent topics included Beijingers enjoying a snowfall, residents of Chongqing eating traditional firepot [huo guo] on the street, and a parade of beautiful women in Latvia

Click on the icon to view the 2 November "Moment in News" segment. 

Click on the icon to view the 3 November "Moment in News" segment. 



"Live News" (31 August)



Live hookup from field reporter (7 September)

-- "24 Hours" (Er Shi Si Xiao Shi)

This new daily program is a live newscast with two announcers and airs at 2300 Beijing Time (1500 GMT). It claims to help "comb through news stories over the past 24 hours" and has been observed to focus on soft news and human interest stories. Its style of presentation is less formal than other newscasts. The hosts often follow up on news stories by sharing observations touching on their own personal experiences. In addition, the male host, Qi Ming, does not wear a tie.



New announcer Qi Ming hosting "24 Hours"; not wearing tie (9 September)



"24 Hours" hosts Xiao Yan and Qi Ming (7 September)

-- "Global Watch" (Huan Qiu Shi Xian)

Hosted by veteran journalist Shui Junyi, the weekday "Global Watch" program is "China's premier international news commentary television program," according to a report in *Jinghua Shibao* (12 August). See OSC Observation on this program (CPP20090817112003).





### ***Overhauled Programs***

-- "Morning News" (Zhao Wen Tian Xia), "News 30 Minutes" (Xin Wen San Shi Fen)

These two newscasts, both simulcast on CCTV-1, were the first of the CCTV-News programs to be revamped, on 27 and 31 July respectively. According to the CCTV website, the two programs now "carry more reports concerned with people's daily lives," "highlight on-site reporting," and "strengthen news commentaries," and the number of news items carried on the revamped programs has increased significantly (4 August).

See OSC summaries of the revamped programs, CPP20090727338001 and CPP20090802072001, and Media Aid CPF20090918326001 on the "Morning News" program.

-- "Law Online" (Fa Zhi Zai Xian)

Originally a 30-minute newsmagazine program focusing on law and order issues, "Law Online" has become a straight newscast focusing on these issues. It is no longer rebroadcast on flagship channel CCTV-1.

-- "Oriental Horizon" (Dong Fang Shi Kong)

Formerly a 30-minute current affairs discussion program, "Oriental Horizon" has become a one-hour straight newscast in a prime time slot, but is no longer recast on CCTV-1. (See OSC Observation on this program's revamp, CPP20090817074001.)

-- "Focus On" (Gong Tong Guan Zhu)

The "Focus On" program previously featured in-depth reports on social welfare issues. It now has been lengthened to one hour and it no longer focuses on social issues. The title of this program previously has been rendered by OSC as "Joint Attention."

### ***Retained Programs***

-- "World Express" (Guo Ji Shi Xun)

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This is a half-hour comprehensive international newscast aired on weekday evenings. It has been shortened from the original one hour.

-- "News Probe" (Xin Wen Diao Cha)

This 45-minute program is an investigative feature program on Saturday evenings which focuses on domestic social issues.

-- "News Weekly" (Xin Wen Zhou Kan)

This 45-minute program on Saturday evenings reviews major domestic news from the previous week.

-- "One on One" (Mian Dui Mian)

This is a 45-minute program featuring exclusive interviews with Chinese officials and domestic newsmakers. It airs on Sunday evenings.

-- "World Weekly" (Shi Jie Zhou Kan)

This 45-minute program on Sunday evenings reviews major international news stories from the previous week.

### ***Discontinued Programs***

Eight programs from the CCTV-News lineup observed in late 2008 appear to have been discontinued. Only four programs are now shared with CCTV-1, as opposed to 8 in late 2008.

-- "Tell It Like It Is" (Shi Hua Shi Shuo)

This was a weekend 45-minute studio talk show program on social issues which was moved to CCTV-1 on Saturdays and later dropped from that channel in late September. In a blog claiming to be that of program host He Jing, the author suggested that censorship was the real reason behind the program's low ratings and cancellation (<http://blog.sina.com.cn/cctvhejing>). The posting claimed the program staff's lack of control over its content had hampered its ability to compete with other media, such as the Internet.

-- "Night News" (Wan Jian Xin Wen)

This newscast was dropped to make way for the newly-added newscast "24 Hours."

-- "Top Talk" (Gao Duan Fang Tan)

This was a Sunday program hosted by current "Global Watch" host Shui Junyi, featuring exclusive interviews with international celebrities. It may have been dropped when Shui moved to his current program.

-- "The Foremost for Me Today" (Wo de Jin Ri zhi Zui)

This was a live studio talk show that discussed popular matters from the Internet and text messages.

-- "People's Stories" (Bai Xing Gu Shi)

This 30-minute news magazine program has been moved to CCTV-1 to air on Saturdays.

-- "Weekly Quality Report" (Mei Zhou Zhi Liang Bao Gao)

This was a weekly 25-minute investigative program that tracked down cases of fraud in consumer goods.

-- "Xiaocui Talk" (Xiao Cui Shuo Shi)

This was a studio talk show mainly focusing on cultural and sports issues.

-- "People in the News" (Xin Wen Hui Ke Ting)

This was a 30-minute weekday program featuring studio interviews with mostly domestic social newsmakers.

## **Appendix B -- Current CCTV-News Lineup**

The following chart provides a current schedule of the CCTV-News programming lineup, with times rendered in GMT; Beijing time is GMT+8. Programs marked with an asterisk (\*) are new programs. Those marked with two asterisks (\*\*) have been overhauled following the revamp. Commercials and CCTV program promotions run both between and during programs.

GMT	Monday to Friday	Saturday	Sunday
2200-0100	Morning News	Morning News	Morning News
0100-0400	Live News*	Live News*	Live News*
0400-0430	News 30 Minutes	News 30 Minutes	News 30 Minutes
0430-0500	Law Online**	Law Online**	Law Online**
0500-1000	Live News*	Live News*	Live News*

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1000-1100	Focus On**	Focus On**		Focus On**
1100-1130	News Hookup	News Hookup		News Hookup
1140-1150	Focus	Focus		Focus
1200-1300	Oriental Horizon**	Oriental Horizon**		Oriental Horizon**
1300-1330	News Hookup [recast]	News Hookup [recast]		News Hookup [recast]
1330-1400	News 1+1	1330-1415	News Probe	One on One
1400-1430	World Express			
1430-1500	Global Watch*	1415-1500	News Weekly	World Weekly
1500-1600	24 Hours*	24 Hours*		24 Hours*
1600-1700	Midnight News	1600-1615	Midnight News	Midnight News
1700-2200	Oriental Horizon, News 1+1, World Express, Global Watch programs recast twice; Focus program recast once	1615-2200	News Probe, News Weekly programs recast three times; Oriental Horizon, Focus programs recast once	One on One, World Weekly programs recast three times; Oriental Horizon, Focus programs recast once

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